FIFTEENE

SERMONS VPON THE SONG OF SALO MON.

Written by GEORGE GYFFORD Preacher of the Word at Maldon in Essex.

AT LONDON

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE, AND HIS very good Lord, *Robert Deuereux*, Earle of Essex and Ewe, Vicount Hereford and Bourgcher, Lord Ferrers of Chartly, Bourgcher & Louaine, Knight of the honorable Oder of the Garter, Maister of the Horse, Generall of her Maiesties Ordinance & Munition, one of her most honorable priuie Conncell, and Earle Marshall of England.

G. *Gyfford* wisheth increase of all true honour in this life, and eternall felicitie in the life to come.

IEsus Christ, the King of Kinges, betrothed himselfe to his church of olde time: she is become his spouse whom he loueth dearely. The mariage shall be at

the generall iudgement in the end of this world, when it ſhall be ſolemnized with great ioy and triumph, as it is written: I hard as the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of ſtrong thundringes, ſaying, Hallelu-iah: for our Lorde God almightie hath raigned. Let vs bee glad and reioyce, and giue glory to him: for the marriage of the Lambe is come, and his wife hath made her ſelfe readie. *Reuel. 19 verſ 6. 7. In the meane time, while ſhe is a pilgrime here vpon earth, there is (according to the ancient manner) a Loue-ſong betweene them, which King Salomon framed and penned, not guided by humane wiſedome, but by the inſpiration of the heauenly ſpirit. As it is a ſong betweene the two chiefe ſtates, the higheſt Lord and the greateſt Ladie; ſo doth it containe the greateſt myſteries, the moſt ſweete and comfortable doctrine, and is therefore worthily named the Song of Songs. In it*

this

this Bridegroome and his Bride do highly extoll and praise each other. To set foorth his excellent dignitie, his richesse & glorie, with all those sweet thinges that flow vnto her from him, she doth bring in all the stateliest, the richest, the goodliest, & the sweetest things vnder heauen. The like doth he in praising her beautie, and her delectable sweetnes. From hence doth spring the great delight and pleasure, which the one taketh in the other, where they doo (as it were) vnfolde the vehement passions of their loue, with that feruent desire which shee hath to bee most neerely ioyned vnto him, and to dwell with him for euer. Also there doo many goodly tokens passe betweene them: for he bestoweth vppon her verie rich iewelles and heauenly ornaments to deck and to beautifie her withall: and she againe rendreth vnto him the sweet fruits of her loue. Moreouer her frailties, her imperfections, and her vnkinde dealing at sometimes towards her

welbeloued, are not omitted, nor the sore afflictions which by that occasion she doth endure. And finding that his Loue is most stedfast, nothing altred nor diminished by her frailtie & vndutifulnes towards him, she is the more enflamed to seeke after him, and to craue his presence and protection, while shee is here below in the midst of so many cruell enemies. Many other speciall things there be which I do here omit. I doe offer this booke vnto your Lordship, not that I esteeme my slender labours in expounding it, worthy to come into your honourable handes: but for the excellent worthines of the matters therin contained. The Princes and Nobles of the earth are delighted to heare of matters which are stately, magnificall and of great glorie: because great thinges doe become great ones. Here are the greatest of all. The Kings & Emperors of this world, especially in their chiefe solemnities, as in the day of their Coronation, or at the marriage of their sonnes and daugh-

daughters, doe shew a greater glorie in riches & delicate pleasure: but if we compare them with the glorie, the riches & pleasures of this Bridegroome and his Bride, they shall bee found to bee but beggarly trash. For what are earthly carnall, and transitorie things, compared with the things which are spirituall, heauenly & euerlasting? Also if great matters delight men, which appertain vnto others, how much more the greatest, which concerne themselues? For who is the Bride in this Song that is so deare vnto Christ, vpon whom so many ornaments & goodly iewels are bestowed? Verily the whole Church; but yet so the whole, as euerie faithfull soule is the spouse decked and made beautifull for so glorious an husband. The blindnesse and mad follie of the worlde is here to be wondred at. Behold the wisedome of the flesh which glorieth in it selfe. If one should forsake an infinite treasure of pearle and precious stones, and lay hold of an heape of drosse, for

some glittering shew making choice of it, all men would haue him in derision. The foolishnes of the wisest worldlings is much greater, while they so set their heartes vpon earthlie riches, carnall delightes, the pompe and glorie of this worlde, and are so drowned in the vnclean lustes and pleasures of sinne, that they neglect the heauenlie treasure, the rich iewels, and comelie ornaments, spirituall ioy and glory which the Bridegrome Iesus Christ bestoweth vpon his spouse. There is no care in seeking after them: they delight to haue their bodies set forth and made glorious with goodlie attire, not caring how they defile the garmentes of their soule, or what filthie and stinking rags of vices it be cloathed withall. I doe not speake this, as though a man could not haue both the glory of this world, and that glory which is from aboue: for King Dauid had both the one and the other: so had Salomon, with many other Kinges and

Nobles

Nobles of the earth. But where anie are ſo ouerwelmed, and euen drowned in the gulf of vaine delightes, and ſo reſt in the glorie of this world as a thing to be gloried in, that they cannot ſeeke after the heauenlie glorie, there is the fooliſhnes. It is no maruaile that the holie Ghoſt termeth the great wiſemen of this world fooles: for who ſeeth not how ſodainly all vaniſheth away as a ſhadowe that is here below? King Dauid in Pſ. 16. gloryeth that God was the portion of his inheritance, and ſaith hee had a faire heritage. But by and by hee giueth thankes to God that gaue him counſell, yea euen by ſecrete inſpirations in the night, for if God had not taught him, hee could neuer haue made ſo good a choiſe. It was alſo by faith, that Moſes, when he was come to age, refuſed to be called the ſonne of Pharaohs daughter, & choſe rather to ſuffer aduerſity with the people of God, thē to enioye the pleaſures of ſinne for a ſeaſō: Eſteeming the rebuke of Chriſt greater

riches

riches then the treasures of Egypt: for hee had respect vnto the recompence of the reward. Heb. 11. vers. 24. 25. 26. *Your Lordship is taught of God to follow these, and to make the like choise, as it doth manifestlie appeare by your singular loue and care to aduance his glorious Gospel: which maketh mee to hope that my rude boldnes shall obtaine pardon. The most high God encrease and stablish your Honor, not onelie on earth, but also for euer in the high heauens. Amen.*

Your Honors most dutifull
to commaund

George Gyffard.

SER-

SERMONS VPON THE SONG OF SALOMON.

THE FIRST SERMON.

CHAP. I.

1 *The Song of Songs which was Salomons.*

2 *Let him kisse me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy loue is better then wine.*

3 *Because of the sauour of thy good ointmentes, thy name is as an ointment powred out: therefore the virgins do loue thee.*

4 *Draw me, wee will runne after thee: the King hath brought me into his chamber, we will be glad & reioyce in thee, we will remember thy loue more then wine, the righteous do loue thee.*

5 *I am blacke O daughters of Ierusalem,*

but

but comely as the fruits of Kedar, and as the curtains of Salomon.

6 Regarde yee mee, not because I am black, for the Sunne hath looked vppon mee: the sonnes of my Mother were angrie with mee, they made me the keeper of the vines, but I kept not mine owne vine.

7 Shew me O thou whome my soule loueth, where thou feedest, where thou lyest at none: why should I bee as shee that turneth aside to the flockes of thy companions?

BEfore that I enter into the handling of these wordes, which I haue now read vnto you: it shal not bee amisse to speake a few thinges in general, touching this song, that you may first looke vpon it, as vpon a goodlie rich peece of worke, but foulded vpp, and then afterwardes haue it vnfoulden and spread before your eyes, to the viewing of euerie part therof. Here be diuers persons brought in vttering their partes in it, but especially two, which are louers, betrothed

thed each vnto the other. This is ſo clear & ſo euident by the words, that none can denie it. It is then, without all controuerſie, a ſong betweeh a bridegrome and a bride, or a ſong of betrothinges, for it was the maner in olde time, to haue mariage ſonges and ſonges of eſpouſals. True it is, that this Bridegrome & this Bride are not named by any proper names in all this Song: but yet it is out of controuerſie, & as cleere as the Sunne who they bee, by that deſcription which is made of them, For he is deſcribed to bee a King of that glory and maieſtie, which no mortall creature hath: and her beauty and glorie alſo is ſet foorth to be ſuch, as far ſurmounteth all the glorie of this world. Then of neceſſitie it doth follow, that this Bridegrome is Ieſus Chriſt the Redeemer and Sauiour of the world, and this Bride is his Church. Theſe be the two vehement louers, which are here brought in. The holy ſcriptures in other places doo vſe theſe ſpeeches of Chriſt and his Church, as that they are betrothed, and ſhall be maried. For the Church is called *the Bride the Lambes wife*, *Reuel.* 21. *verſ.* 9. And the day of iudgement is called *the day of their mariage*, *Reuel.* 19. *verſe* 7. Alſo

Iohn

Iohn the Baptiſt, when ſome are diſpleaſed that Chriſt ſhould haue more honor then he, frameth this anſwere vnto them euen from this Song ſaying, *Hee that hath the bride is the bridegrome: but the friende of the bridegrome which ſtandeth and heareth him, reioyceth greatlie, becauſe of the bridegromes voice, Iohn. 3. verſ. 29.* Where you may ſee how hee calleth Chriſte the Bridegrome, his Church the Bride, and himſelfe the Bridegromes friende. Chriſt calleth himſelfe the Bridegrome, *Marke* 3. It was the auncient manner that the parties which ſhould bee man and wife were betrothed, & then after ſome diſtance of time the mariage was ſolemnized. Betweene the time of their betrothing and the mariage day, tokens of loue and kindnes did vſe to paſſe betweene them: but when they are maried the wife is receiued into the ſocietie of her husband, to be partaker with him of all his riches and poſſeſſions. The Lord Ieſus hath betrothed himſelfe to his holy ſpouſe the Church, euen from the time of his promiſe made vnto Adam and Eue, *The ſeede of the woman ſhall breake the Serpentes head Geneſ. 3.* The mariage betweene them ſhall bee ſolemnized *at the day of iudgement*, as I noted before.

fore, *Reuel.* 16.7. Then ſhall ſhe be receiued to dwell with him in the heauens, and bee partaker of his riches and glorie. In the meane time, while ſhe is here in this world, he ſheweth great kindnes towardes her, comforteth, ſupporteth and defendeth her, beſtowing alſo manie goodlie gifts and ornaments vpon her, and ſhe againe for her part renders the tokens of her loue towards him: and this ſong ſetteth forth all theſe things, which do paſſe thus betweene them. But you muſt note that all their ſpeeches is vnder an Allegorie, for when each of them doth praiſe the beautie and comelines of the other, looke what is beautifull, comelie or ſtatelie vnder heauen, it is brought in for to expreſſe the ſame. And to repreſent the ſpirituall and heauenly ornamentes and iewels which hee beſtoweth vppon her, and the fruites of her loue which ſhee rendreth vnto him for the ſame, here are reckoned vpp all the ſweeteſt, the richeſt, & the moſt precious thinges that are founde among men. There is but one bridegrome, and one bride: for all the elect from the beginning of the world vnto the ende, doe make but one holy Catholike Church, being all coupled together by one ſpirit, to make one bodie,

bodie, whereof Christ is the head, but yet here are diuers persons brought in besides in this song, sometime speaking, and sometime spoken vnto. Yea the bride speaketh now and then of her mother, and of her little sister. Here we must note, that it was the manner of old, that the bridegrome had yong-men to be his companions, and so this bridegrome hath his companions or friends not onely the holy Angels which minister vnto him for the seruice of his Church, *Heb.* 1. but also the Prophets, the Apostles, and all faithfull pastors and teachers, as Iohn the Baptist termeth himselfe one of his friendes. Also the bride had virgins to be her companions, and with these this spouse of Christ is said to bee also accompanied: these are called the daughters of Ierusalem. And touching the other matter that shee hath a mother and a sister, that may seeme somewhat harder to be vnderstood: for her mother is the true Church, & her little sister also is the true Church, and yet but one true Church: how may this bee? This is easily answered: for it is the manner in the Hebrew tongue to call the whole the mother, and the parts of the whole are called daughters and sisters. Then marke this,

this, that although there be but one vniuersall Church; yet because the same is neuer whole in the world at one time, the whole Church vppon earth is said to haue a mother, for she is but a part of the vniuersall Church. And then further, the Church vpon earth in Salomons time, did consist of the nation of the Iewes: the Church of the Gentiles was not as then come, which is called her little sister. Thus much may suffice touching this song in generall, and now let vs come to the words of the text.

These seauen verses which I haue read vnto you, are first to be diuided into two parts, whereof the one is the generall title or inscription of the whole booke contayned in one verse: the other is the first speech of the bride expressed in fiue verses following. As touching the title, it doth shew vnto vs two things: namely, that it is a Song of Songes, and that King Salomon did frame it and write it. The former speech may be expounded two waies, as to say, it is all but one song, & yet it contayneth in it diuers songs. A song of songs, euen as song that consisteth of diuers songs, it is a much as to say, the principall or most excellent song of all others. This title then is giuen to commend

vnto vs the worthines of it, to the end that wee may esteeme of it accordinglie: but let vs see how farre the comparison reacheth, that is, with what songs it is compared, whether it be said to bee the most principall of all the songs which are in the holy Scriptures, or of those onely which King Salomon made: for he made a thousand & fiue, 1. *King.* 4. Now as this word (which) in our English tongue is vsed without difference of Number or Gender: so is the word *asher* in the Hebrew tongue, that signifieth (which) in our tongue. Then if we should translate it in the plural number and say thus, the song of songs which were Salomons, the comparison should be but in this manner, this is the principall or the most excellent song of all those thousand and fiue songs, which were Salomons But if we take it in the singular number, and say thus: the song of songes, which was Salomons, then doth the comparison stand generall, as if he should say, this Song which Salomon made, is the chiefe and the most worthy song of all other, which are set forth in the holy Scriptures. And this latter I take to bee right. There be many Psalmes and many Songs in the sacred Bible, which doe

doe excell all other Songs that haue been in the world, and no one of them but is very pretious: yet this Song excelleth them all: for if a man vnderstand it, hee shal be forced to confesse, that there is not the like sweetnes and comfort in any song. Seeing then that the holy Ghost hath thus praised it vnto vs, let vs giue all diligence to attaine to the true sense and vnderstanding of it, that we may haue the vse of it to our ioy & comfort; as of a most pretious iewell. And when we read that it was Salomons, wee are not to stay in the man: but wee must consider that hee was a Prophet, and so in this worke but the instrumente & pen of the holy Ghost. It is not the word then of a man (though hee were the wisest man,) but the word of God, and with such a minde wee are to receiue it. Thus much touching the title or inscription.

Let him kisse mee with the kisses of his mouth, &c. The bride doth begin this worthy song & (as you see) shee crieth out with a wonderful desire of her loue Christ to haue his presence, and to bee imbraced of him, and to dwell with him. For all her speech in these sixe verses tendeth to that one thing, sauing that in the fift and sixt verse shee

doth take away an obiection which may bee made against her, namely, that shee is blacke, and therefore nothing meete to bee the spouse of such a one as shee speaketh of. But what? shall we take it then, that the Church doth first seeke after Christ, because she is first brought in after this vehement manner, crying out to bee with him? Doth not the holy Scripture teach the contrarie, and say plainely, *we loue him, because he loued vs first*? 1. *Ioh.* 4. *verse.* 19. Yea, and if you marke well her speeches, you may see that it is his loue towards her gon before, which draweth her thus earnestly to seeke after him, She had felt his loue, and saith it is better then wine. Shee had found the sweetnes of his graces and heauenly gifts, and therefore (as she confesseth) doth loue him. Hee had let her see what rich tre asures hee hath layde vp in store for her, & that enflameth her with a burning desire to be ioyned with him. And now touching her manner of Phrase. *Let him kisse mee with the kisses of his mouth*: wee see that this beginning is according to that allegorie vnder which the whole song is written. True louers which are betrothed, and haue promised mariage each to the other, do with kisses expresse their

their loue. The Church then being betrothed vnto Christ, vnder this gesture of louers, expresseth her ardent desire of a neerer presence of him her spouse, that he may imbrace her, and giue her yet greater tokens of his loue, yea bee ioyned most neerlie vnto her for euer. Where loue is hot, there be great passions in the minde, and the speeches which do expresse the same are pathetical. Euen so here this holy bride, this chast and pure virgin, breaketh forth into her speech with an exclamation, wich is full of passions, not of naturall passions, but of spirituall loue and zeale, with which shee is enflamed, and euen as it were with an impatience desireth a nearer conjunction with Christ. But let vs come yet more neerelie into the examination of her wordes, & more fullie to see her affection. You see that shee doth vehementlie desire not onely to bee kissed of her spouse, but also as shee saieth, *with the kisses of his mouth.* Here you must marke well, why shee calleth them the kisses of his mouth; for this is not a superfluous speech. Out of his mouth proceedeth that sacred word, which is the instrument wherby she is ioyned vnto him. For by the liuely oracles he calleth her, hee lighteneth her,

hee worketh faith in her, he armeth her a-gainſt her enemies, he feedeth her: yea to ſpeake briefly, he conueyeth all his graces & all good things into her, euen by the ſame his word. No maruaile then though ſhe be enflamed with the deſire of the kiſſes of his mouth. From hence it is, that Dauid doth ſo highly commend the holy doctrine of the Lord, that it is perfect, pure & infallible, and of ſuch worthy operation & effectes in the belieuers, that he ſaieth it is more to be deſired then gold, yea then much fine gold, ſweeter then the honie or the hony combe. *Pſal.* 19. But was the holy ſpouſe at any time without the worde? for ſhee ſeemeth to crie for that which ſhee had not. Chriſt did kiſſe his beloued Spouſe with ſome kiſſes of his mouth, euen from the beginning: for he did betroth himſelf vnto her by his word, his couenant, and promiſes, euen at the firſt. But marke how in his holy wiſedome hee hath diſpoſed the matter, ſo as he commeth neerer and neerer as it were by degrees, euen vnto the full and perfect coniunction. Adam and all the holy Fathers before the floud had his word and couenant, by which he did aſſure them of his loue and fauour vnto eternall ſaluation. He renewed his pro-

miſe

mise with Abraham, Izhak, & Iaakob. And after that the children of Israel were come out of the bondage of Egypt, he did more fully deliuer his lawes and ordinances vnto them, by Moses. But as yet all thinges were vnder figures and shadowes. Moses & all the Prophetes did foreshew, that in the fulnes of time the bridegroome himselfe would come in his owne person & fulfill all things. Then commeth the cleare light of the Gospell, & this is one of the kisses of his mouth, which she so vehemently desireth. All the Patriarkes, Prophetes, and holy ones, did wonderfully long to see the bridegrome manifested in the flesh. And therefore Christ telleth his Disciples, saying. *Blessed are the eyes that see that yee see, For I tell you that many Prophets and Kinges haue desired to see those thinges which you see, and haue not seene them: & to heare those thinges which you heare, & haue not heard them. Luke 10. vers. 24.* This is (as I saide) one of the kisses of his mouth, which the holy spouse did so vehemētly desire. And thee did know that there is yet a neerer kisse of his mouth and that is when he shall say, *Come yee blessed of my Father, inherite the Kingdome &c. Math 25.* And for this

this is now her chiefe earnest desire. For as S. Iohn witnesseth, *the spirit & the bride say, Come. Reue.* 22. 17. At the receiuing of this kisse shee shalbe ioyned with him for euermore: and therefore she desireth this day aboue all other. Here then wee may see, that while this holy virgin, the Lambes wife, is here below vpon the earth, yet her heart is in the heauens, her ioye is with her beloued, vnto whome shee desireth to be ioyned. Is this the true Church? What shall wee say then of them which are so wordly minded, that they neuer long after these kisses of the bridegroome? Are their affections set vpon heauenly things, as S. Paule requireth? *Col.* 3. Beloued, let euery man trie himselfe. If yee feele the desire to bee ioyned with Christ by a true & liuely faith, which is ingendred by his word, euen as it were by the kisses of his mouth, and that ye long to be with him in the heauens, blessed are yee; wordlings haue no such longing.

It followeth, *For thy loue is better then wine.* In these wordes she rendreth a reason of that her most vehement desire which shee hath to be ioyned with him. The summ of it is, that his loue wherewith he hath loued her first, is so sweet and comfortable, as

that

that it is beyond all comparison: She ſaith it is better then wine, and wine is a very precious thing, which is (as the ſcripture ſaith) giuen to comfort mans heart Pſ. 104. And becauſe wine is as a principall thing in banquets, it is here put for all the daintie, delicate, ſweete and comfortable or coſtly things in the world, which the greateſt Kinges doe uſe in feaſts and banquets. Sweete and daintie they be indeed vnto the carnall man: and while the children of this worlde doe ſeeke very greedily to fill and ſtuffe themſelues with the ſame, repoſing their chiefe felicitie and comfort therein: the holy ſpouſe ſheweth plainly that ſhe deſpiſeth theſe earthly daintes, and that the loue of Chriſt is ſweeter vnto her then they all. The delicate perſons which follow their pleaſures, and haue their fine muſicke and their ſweete wines, finde not ſuch delight and comfort in their banqueting, as ſhe doth in the loue of her ſpouſe Ieſus Chriſt. Then you ſee how her ſpeech ſtandeth: ſhe crieth out with deſire to be with him, rendring this reaſon, that his loue is better vnto her, then all the ſweete and daintie things that princes haue here in the world. Now commeth it that the loue of Chriſt is ſo ſweete

vnto

vnto her? or as shee speaketh in the plurall number, thy loues, because his loue is the principall of all. It is from hence, that she knoweth he would giue himselfe for her, that hee might sanctifie her, and cleanse her by the washing of water throgh the word, that hee might make her vnto himselfe a glorious Church, not hauing spot or wrinckle, &c. *Eph.* 5. *vers.* 25. 26. 27. The whole number of the elect were in themselues vnder the thraldome of sinne and condemnation, and should all haue gone to hell, but that as Saint Iohn saieth, hee loued vs, and washed vs from our sinnes in his blood, and made vs kings and Priestes to God his Father, *Reue.* 1. *vers.* 5. 6. Is not here a sweete loue, which is better (as shee saith) then wine? This loue did Moses feele through faith, and it caused him to refuse to be called the sonne of Pharaos daughter, and chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God then to enioye the pleasures of sinne for a season, esteeming the rebuke of Christ greater riches then the treasures of Egypt, *Heb.* 11. This loue did S. Paule (who before was a blasphemer and a persecutor) feele the sweetnes of it, and it caused him, as a man crucified to the world, to de-

spise

ſpiſe all earthly treaſures, and to ſay, I deſire to bee diſſolued and to be with Chriſt. We read of a woman in the goſpell, which waſhed the feete of our Lorde with teares, and wiped them with the hayres of her head, ſhe loued much, for in the aboundance of his loue, ſhe felt that he had forgiuen her manie ſinnes. And doubtles euery ſoule, which through a true and liuely faith doth apprehend the forgiuenes of ſinnes in his blood, crieth out, *Let him kiſſe me with the kiſſes of his mouth, for thy loue is better then wine.*

It followeth, *Becauſe of the Sauour of thy good ointmentes, thy name is as an ointement powred out, therefore the virgins doe loue thee.* In this verſe ſhe rendreth a reaſon, why her heart is ſo ſet vppon him, and why ſhe doth ſo loue him, that in compariſon of him, ſhe renounceth all the glory and riches, and pleaſures of this world, vtterly deſpiſing them as droſſe and vanitie. Her reaſon is drawne from the excellencie of her beloued that he is full of ſweet things, by which he doth perfume her, and ſo maketh her ſweete alſo. For that which giueth the ſweeteſt ſauour, maketh a man to couet moſt after it. Her ſpeech wherewith ſhe ſetteth forth the com-

commendation of his ſweetnes, is framed according to the figures of the law. God commaunded Moſes to make a pretious ointment, and therewith to annoint the tabernacle and the miniſtring veſſels, alſo Aaron and his ſonnes, *Exod.* 30. And as it is in *Pſ.* 133. This ointment was powred vpon the head of Aaron, and went down to the skirts of his clothing. Hereby was figured the annointing of the Sonne of God our Lord Ieſus with the holy Ghoſt, according as it is written, the ſpirit of the Lord is vpon me, becauſe he hath annointed me, *Eſa.* 61. He is therfore Chriſt, euen the Lords annointed, he in our nature, that is in the manhood, as the head ouer the whole Church, hath receiued the fulnes of all graces, as it is written, that God gaue not the ſpirit to him by meaſure, *Io.* 3. *ver.* 34. And that it pleaſed the Father, that in him all fulnes ſhould dwell, *Col.* 1. 19. Here is then the veſſell, which as the rich treaſurie is full of all heauenlie & moſt ſweete graces, euen the man Ieſus Chriſt. But marke how the bride doth proceede further in this matter. If a ſweete ointment be cloſed vp in a veſſel, the ſauour of it is little felt to thoſe that come neare it, but when it is powred forth, then the ſweetnes

nes thereof doth spread and perfume all. We reade in the gospell of a woman which had a boxe of verie costlie ointment of spikenarde, and shee brake the boxe and poured the ointment vpon the head of Iesus as he sate at table, *Marke* 14. *vers.* 3. and the house was filled with the sauor of the ointment, *Iohn.* 12. *vers.* 3. So, marke how she speaketh here, *At the sauour of thy good ointmentes, thy name is as an ointment powred out*: For by this she sheweth that the bridegrome her welbeloued doth not as a close vessell keepe into himselfe those sweete graces wherwith he is annointed, but that they are in deede powred forth vpon her, to annoint her, and to make her sweete also. The graces of Christ which are here called his sweete ointments are powred forth indeed, and doe flow from him the head into all partes of his mistical body, that is to say, vpon all the members of his Church, which being made partakers of his annointing, and called Christians: as it is written of his fulnes wee all receiue, euen grace for grace, *Iohn* 1. *vers.* 16. But marke now how his name is an ointment powred forth: Hee fulfilled all righteousnes *Matth.* 3. *vers.* 15. He offered himselfe by his eternall spirit without

without ſpot vnto God, *Heb. 9. verſ.* 14. He hath by his ſacrifice of himſelfe, euen by the blood of his croſſe, appeaſed the wrath of his Father, and made reconciliation for the ſinnes of the world. He doth cloath all his elect with his owne holines, he doth ſlay ſinne in them, & repleniſheth them with the vertues and graces of his ſpirite, thus is his name as a pretious oyntment powred out. And therfore (ſaith ſhee) the virgins do loue thee. When Chriſt crucified is preached, when the vertue and power of his death & reſurrection are ſhewed, when all his graces are diſplayd & laide open, then is, as it were, the boxe of the good ointmentes broken, & his name is as an oyntment powred forth, then is there a moſt ſweet ſauour, which cauſeth the virgins to loue him. Thus you ſee that the ſweetnes of his graces and heauenly gifts powred forth vpon her, haue enflamed her heart with this vehement loue & deſire to be with him. Al men are by nature vncleane, filthie, ſtinking & loathſome: but all doe not ſo well perceiue it, onely the regenerate doe come to the true ſenſe of the loathſome ſauour of their ſinnes, & feele that they are made ſweete by his ſweete oyntments, & theſe are they that doe loue him.

But

But how is this, that ſhee ſaieth the virgins doe loue him? Is there any other virgin that doth loue Chriſt beſides her ſelfe? Is not ſhee alone his ſpouſe, and the onely chaſt & pure one? Who then bee theſe virgins that ſhee ſpeaketh of? They bee her daughters, they be her companions, they be her ſelfe. For though ſhe be but one, if wee reſpect the whole body, yet becauſe ſhee conſiſteth of many, euen of al the elect, ſhee ſpeaketh alſo of her ſelfe as of many. She is a chaſt virgin, & euery faithfull ſoule is a chaſt virgin vnto Chriſt. Saint Paule ſaith, he was ielous ouer the Church of Corinth with a godly ielouſie: for I haue (ſaith he) coupled you to one mã, to preſent you a chaſt virgin vnto Chriſt 2. *Cor.* 11. *ver.* 2. Theſe virgins be al the chaſt worſhippers of God. *Reuel.* 14. *ver.* 4. Theſe onely do ſmel the ſweete ſauour of Chriſt. The worldlinges, whome the Scripture calleth adulterers, & adultereſſes, *Iam.* 4. *ver.* 4. becauſe they do by giuing their heart to the world, euen to vncleane luſtes of the fleſh, commit ſpiritual whoredome againſt God, are drowned & ouerwhelmed in the ſtinke of filthy vncleannes, and cannot ſmel the ſweet oyntments of Chriſt: and therefore they do not, nor cannot loue him.

In

In the next verſe ſhe ſaieth: *Draw mee, wee will runne after thee: the King hath brought mee into his Chambers, wee will bee glad and reioyce in thee, wee will remember thy loue more then wine, the righteous doe loue thee.* Here ſhee vttereth ſtill her vehement affections, and deſire to bee with her Chriſt, in diuers ſpeeches, which wee will handle briefly as they lie. We haue ſeene by her former ſpeeches, that by his loue towardes her, and by the ſweetnes of his graces powred forth vpon her, ſhee is ſo enflamed with loue of him, and with the deſire of being ioyned vnto him, that in heart and mind and affection ſhe mounteth vp aboue the heauens, deſpiſing al thinges here below vnder the Sunne, eyther riches, pleaſures or glorie, as meere traſh and vanitie. Her bridegrome is farre beyonde them all in price and dignitie, he is her only treaſure and ioy. This (I ſay) we haue ſeene by her ſpeech, and now is it come to this, that ſhee ſaieth, *Draw mee, wee will runne after thee.* Alas good virgin, hath ſhee ſo great a deſire to runne after him, her onely ioy in whome ſhe knoweth is all felicitie, and doe not her legs ſerue? Doth her ſtrength fayle? or doth ſhe faint in the race? Doth ſhee deſire moſt vehemently,

hemently, and yet cannot performe? Yea verily it is euen so. This is her estate. She doth plainly confesse her frailtie, and the feebleneſſe of her knees, that ſhe cannot runne after him, except he draw her. What ſhould be the reaſon of this? Surely her race is vpward, and ſhe hath a burden vpon her that preſſeth her downe. You all the virgins, all her daughters, all her companions haue their load vpon them. Though they loue Chriſt, yet they cannot continue their race after him any faſter then hee ſhall draw them. If hee ceaſe drawing, they giue ouer running. If you will demaund what it is which doth ſo burden and preſſe downe, ſo clog and hamper the feete, and make the knees ſo feeble: the holy Ghoſt doth tell you, if you will reade, *Heb.* 12. *verſ.* 1. The ſpirit and grace of God doth draw, but the corruption of our nature in euery one doth euen ſtriue to quench the ſpirit. Therefore the holy Apoſtle ſaieth, the fleſh luſteth againſt the ſpirit, ſo that you cannot doo what you would *Gal.* 5. The ſame doctrine he teacheth, *Romans* 7. And Chriſt Ieſus ſaid to his Apoſtles: *The ſpirit is willing, but the fleſh is weake. Mat.* 26. *verſ.* 41. And no man (ſaith he) commeth vnto me, except the Father that ſent me, doe draw him *Iob.* 6. Marke well this prayer of the holy ſpouſe: for thereby you may ſee plainely, how contrary ſhe is to that bold and impudent ſtrumpet, the Whore of Babell,

bel, euen that idolatrous church of Rome, which maintaineth with sharpe arguments, euen with fire and sword, that men haue free will & power of themselues, being once assisted by grace, to runne vnto Christ. The filthie harlot condemneth his holy virgin of heresie, because she will not be ioyne with her: Indeed that wicked Whore saith, that mans will is so enfeebled, that without grace it can doe nothing, but preuented and holpen, and as it were set on foote by grace, she saith, it can and doth performe all things. Marke (I say) how the Bride doth here gainesay her: for she had receiued grace, shee had runne, and doth runne, and craueth his graces that she may runne still, yea and that shee may run faster, and runne to the end. It is not then (brethren) as these false spirits doe beare men in hand, that man is but maimed and halfe dead, and being set vp, and supported by grace, can run then of himselfe. Nay there must bee grace vpon grace still euen to the end. Hereupon the faithfull soules feeling how they be still euen yoked with the remnants of sinne, and crying day and night vnto the Lord Iesus to quicken them, and to strengthen them, and to draw them by his liuely word, and holy spirit, that they may runne after him, doe farre differ from those prouide hypocrites which glorie in themselues, that they can runne, and can doe what they list.

It followeth, *The King brought me into his chambers, &c.* The words which follow doe ſhew that this clauſe ſhould rather be tranſlated thus: When the King ſhall bring mee into his chambers: for ſhe ſpeaketh of a ioy and gladnes which ſhall follow thereupon. This is out of doubt, that he had before this time brought her into his chambers; for ſhee ſpeaketh of a thing wherewith ſhe was vnacquainted. For ſuch here among men as doe betroth themſelues, doe willingly make knowne vnto them, to whom they are betrothed, what riches and treaſures they haue in ſtore for them to poſſeſſe, when they ſhall come to be their wiues. So our Lord Ieſus Chriſt, hauing betrothed himſelf vnto his church, had from time to time, euen from the beginning led her into his chambers, and ſhewed her what treaſures, riches, and glorie hee hath laid vp for her in the heauens. Kings haue the greateſt treaſures vpon earth, and the richeſt ornaments in their chambers: this King that ſhe ſpeaketh of is the greateſt of all Kings: and all the riches of the Kings of this world are but dreſſe in compariſon of thoſe which he hath laid vp, and reſerueth in the heauenly manſions for his beloued ſpouſe. True it is, that ſhe hath had but a glimmering of them, and therefore ſtill coueteth to ſee them more fullie: and her bridegroome hath opened them vnto her more fullie at ſome time then at

other. Hee led her into the chambers in the time of the law, and opened his treasures vnto her, to shew her the riches and glorie of his Kingdome, which shee shall inherite with him: but this hee hath done more fully vnder the Gospell, since he was manifested in the flesh: and most fully it shal be done at the day of the marriage, when he shall receiue her home vnto him to dwell with him in the heauens for euer. But here it may be demaunded, how he leadeth her into his chambers, that is into the heauens, while she is yet in the earth? You must vnderstand that this leading is spirituall: he doth giue vnto her an eye of faith, by which shee beholdeth the inuisible heauenly riches and treasures of life. His word layeth them open, and his spirit giueth the sight as the holy Apostle teacheth saying: *The eye hath not seene, and the eare hath not heard, neither haue entred into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that loue him. But God hath reuealed them vnto vs by his spirit.* 1. *Cor.* 2. 9. 10. You see then that it is the holy spirit, by which the Bridegrome leadeth the Bride into his chambers to shew what things hee hath prepared for her, which spirit dealeth not without the word. Then behold what is added, *Wee will reioyce and bee glad in thee &c.* Here is spirituall ioy, here is mirth and gladnesse which followeth vpon the sight of the heauenly treasures. Take a Virgin which

which is bethrothed vnto ſome great Prince and lead her into his chambers and ſhew vnto her all his rich ornaments and glorie, and tell her that all is kept for her, will it not make her to reioyce and bee glad? will not her minde bee affected with the loue of ſuch a husband? Now this virgin is led into the heauenly chāber where is ſhewed vnto her the glorie and riches of the life to come, which ſhe ſhall poſſeſſe: how is it poſſible then, but that ſhee ſhould bee euen repleniſhed with ioy and gladnes? how can it bee otherwiſe, but that ſhee ſhall mention his loue (as ſhe ſaith) more then wine? Is there any thing in this world, which will not ſeeme vile vnto her in compariſon? Yea, will not ſhe (that is to ſay euen al the righteous) loue him, magnifie him extol and praiſe him, and his loue? Some of the children of this world, when the Goſpel is preached, are a little lightned, and doe as it were peepe in at the dores of theſe chambers of the Bridegrome, and haue a little dimme ſight of the riches and glorie, and are a little moued therewith for the time vnto ioy and gladnes: but the pleaſures and cares of this world, which are deeply ſeated in their hearts, do put out al againe. Their faith, their hope, and their ioy in heauenly things doe vaniſh, and they lay hold of things tranſitorie. Beloued, let vs take heede that wee be not ſuch, let vs not in our vncleaneſſe ſtand without

but goe in at the dores, and away; but let vs endeuour to bee of these pure virgins, and so with her together be led into the chambers, that with her wee may view the heauenly treasures prepared, and bee assured that they bee kept for to make vs reioyce (as Saint *Peter* saith) *with ioy vnexplicable and glorious* 1. *Pet.* 1. *vers.* 4. 5. 8. for this cause wee mention his loue more then wine, and we despise all things here below, and wee loue him. Well, let vs come now vnto her next speech.

I am blacke, O daughters of Ierusalem, but comely &c. Now she commeth to take away the obiection which may bee made against her after this manner. It falleth out sometimes, that some doe loue them which doe not loue them againe. Thou art wrapt with a vehement loue, but is not towardes such a one as careth not for thee? for thou setteſt him forth to bee a glorious King, so rich, and so full of sweet things, as that nothing vnder heauen is any thing cõparable vnto him. Thou art not fit to be the wife of such an one; how should he loue the? for thou art black. Is it not meet that so goodly a King should haue a right beautifull Queene? How can she answer his? She doth answere it fully. First, confessing that she is black indeed. I know that I am black but yet withal I am comely, I am wel-fauoured. Then she vseth two comparisõs: the one to shew her

her blacknes, the other to set forth her comelines. Touching the first comparison, our translation saith, *as the fruits of Kedar*: but the words are *as the tents of Kedar*. They were men which in hot countries kept cattell, and removing from place to place, dwelt in boothes and tents. The other comparison is in these words, *as the curtaines or the hangings of Salomon*. Now we must know that in both these there is a figuratiue speech: for by the tents and the curtaines are vnderstood those that dwell in them. As if shee should say, I am blacke indeed, as the men in the tents of Kedar which are sun-burnt, but yet I am comely, as they that dwell in the Court of *Salomon*. For these curtaines are all the hangings, yea by them is vnderstood all the whole glorie of *Salomons* Court. Wee reade in the holy Scriptures that there was no glory in the world comparable to the glory of King *Salomon*. The Queene of Saba was astonished when shee beheld it. If the spirituall comelines and beautie of the spouse of Christ, now in the time of her frailtie and imperfection, be comparable with *Salomon* in all his royaltie, yea doe exceed him: what shall her beautie be, when all her blacknes shall be taken away, and Christ shall wash her, and make her a glorious Church not hauing spot or wrinckle? *Ephes.* 5.

But now where as shee confesseth that shee is

blacke, is it not some cause to impaire her dignitie, or may she not iustly for the same be the lesse esteemed? No, for she doth answere to that, shewing that her blacknes is not natiue, it is not according to her spirituall birth, it is accidentary, it is but for a time, shee is but sun-burnt, *Looke not vpon me* (saith she) *that I am somewhat blacke, for the sunne hath shined vpon me.* A notable place to teach vs to take heede how wee esteeme the Church of Christ: for many haue despised her, reproached and forsaken her, because shee is blacke. It hath been their vtter destruction, that they could not looke into her inward beautie, and put a difference betweene her present estate of frailtie and imperfection, and that perfect beautie vnto which she shall come. This admonition which she giueth, is right necessarie at all times for her weake daughters, least they bee offended and forsake her for her blacknes: but there is then an other question ariseth: why should she be sun-burnt? If she bee so great a Queene, the darling of a most high and glorious King, what occasion hath shee to impaire her beautie? To this she answereth, that it is a cruell violence & a spiteful iniurie offered vnto her, & that by such as of all other ought least so to deale with her. Shee vseth this similitude, as if a yong beautifull virgin dwelling in her mothers house, had churlish and rough fellowes to her brethren, who in anger

anger thruſt her out at doores to keep the vines, and ſo ſhe is compelled to bee in the ſun, and to be ſun-burnt. And ſo ſhe ſaith, *that her mothers ſonnes were angrie with her, and made her the keeper of the vines.* It is a moſt cleare caſe that the holy Church, and all her perfecteſt children doe want of the perfect beautie while they liue here, and are ſomewhat blacke, partly through ſinnes which doe remaine in them, and partly through afflictions. I need not ſtand to proue this, being a matter ſo euident. But herein is ſome difficultie, who they be whom ſhe calleth her mothers ſonnes. Some haue taken it that ſhe calleth originall ſinne, euen all the concupiſcences of the fleſh, which are in all the elect from the wombe, her mothers ſonnes: for by theſe ſhe is forced to commit many ſinnes, which dimme her beautie, and to omit the doing her dutie in part, for her owne vine, ſhe ſaith ſhe did not keepe, wherein the true beautie conſiſteth. All this is true, and according to that which Saint *Paule* ſpeaketh of himſelfe, *Rom.* 7. But I doe not ſee how concupiſcences can be called the ſonnes of her mother: for in this ſong ſhee calleth the Church that was of former time her mother. Shee doth not (as I take it) ſpeake of any mother but one. I take it therefore rather, that ſhe calleth the degenerate children her mothers ſonnes. They bee borne in the Church, they be deſcended of the holy ones,

ones, they be by outward profession the children of the true Church, but she calleth them not the sonnes of God, nor yet her brethren, for they be very bastards and degenerate children. Such were the wicked priests and false Prophets in time of the law, such haue been all the Heretikes, popish Prelates, and sects of idolatrous and superstitious orders vnder the gospel. All these haue arrogantly challenged to themselues the honor and dignitie of Gods Church, and with wrath and furie haue offered violence vnto the true spouse of Christ, whereof she here complaineth. It would bee a matter ouer long and tedious for me to rehearse what persecutions and afflictions these haue laid vpon the Church, and what desolations and deformities they haue brought vpon her. True it is, that God by these hath afflicted and chastised his chosen people for their sinnes. Then we see why she is somewhat blacke, and it standeth vs vpon that wee take heed wee despise her not for the same, Howsoeuer she seemeth to the eyes of the world, to bee base and farre vnmeet for such a bridegrome, yet is she beautifull in his eyes, and he will ridde her and set her free from all infirmities, and from the violence of her cruell foes, hee will make her to shine in perfect beautie and glorie. Shee shall bee bright as the sunne in the firmament.

Now she turneth her speech againe vnto her beloued

beloued (that it may appeare he regardeth her) praying moſt earneſtly vnto him that hee will ſhew her where hee feedeth, and where he cauſeth his flocke to lie downe at noone (for ſo the words are to be tranſlated) ſhewing that if hee doe not, it would not be for his honour, nor for her good. For the ſenſe of this, firſt you know that Chriſt is the great ſhepheard, and therefore the Church on earth ſeeketh onely after him to be fed. For when ſhee calleth vpon him to ſhew her where he feedeth his ſheepe, it is to this end that he will feed her as hee fed the flockes of former times, for ſhe knoweth that there is but one true ſhepheard, who feedeth all his ſheepe with the ſame paſture: ſhe looketh for no wholeſome foode, vnleſſe it be with the auncient Churches. Then next, it was the manner of the ſhepheards in thoſe hot Countries to driue their ſheepe in the heat of the day, vnto a place of ſhadow, where they might lie downe and refreſh them in that time of the parching heat. The bride craueth inſtantly of him whome ſhee loueth moſt entirely, that hee will ſhew vnto her the place where he cauſeth his flocke to lie downe at noone. The ſumme of her requeſt is, that hee will not onely as her great ſhepheard, feed her with his wholeſome foode of life; but alſo that hee will refreſh her, as it were in the ſhadow, when the ſunne ſhineth hoteſt, that is, when perſecutions bee

the

the greateſt. For by the parching heate of the ſunne, is meant the heate of perſecution, as our Sauiour teacheth, *Mat.*13, A moſt worthie place to be noted, that the true Church doth not onely depend vpon Chriſt Ieſus alone for her foode, reiecting all doctrines of men, but alſo is in the middeſt of the hotteſt perſecutions refreſhed by him. When tyrants doe rage, you would thinke that the poore Church were neglected of him, as moſt wretched and moſt miſerable: but it is nothing ſo: for euen then doth he refreſh her in his comfortable ſhadow: for the faithfull receiuing the comforter whome hee ſendeth, *Ioh.*16, doe reioyce in afflictions, *Rom.* 5. *verſ.*4. And when they haue trouble in the world, they haue peace in Chriſt, *Ioh.*16. *verſ.*33. Behold the wonderfull power of the Lord vnto thoſe whom he feedeth. Men are afraide to profeſſe the goſpell, becauſe of the cruell perſecutors, and ſo they doe account it a ſafetie to flie from Chriſt: the holy Church is contrarie, ſhe doth not ſeeke how ſhe may deale couertly, and ſo auoide perill, but openly approacheth vnto Chriſt, knowing that he can and will refreſh her, euen when the ſunne ſhineth hotteſt. Let vs then ſeeke with our mother, and cleaue to Chriſt, for hee hath a layer, at noon he will refreſh vs and make vs in him to lie downe in peace euen in the middeſt of the burning flames. All the holy Martyrs which

ſuffered

ſuffered for the Goſpell doe teſtifie this thing: why ſhould we then be afraide? Then touching the reaſon which ſhe addeth, that if hee doe not ſhew her where he feedeth, & alſo refreſh her in the heate, ſuch is her frailtie that ſhe ſhal decline and ioyn with falſe worſhippers; and that would not bee to his honour, nor to her good. Why (ſaith ſhe) *ſhould I bee as one that turneth aſide to the flocks of thy companions?* Or as it may well bee tranſlated, as one that pitcheth or ſpreadeth her tent by the flocks of thy companions. That the faithfull doe worſhip God aright in ſpirit and truth, *Ioh.* 4. and doe not ioyne with Idolaters, they haue it not of themſelues but from hence, that they bee all taught of God *Ioh.6. verſ.*45. But if ſhee ſpeake here of Idolatrous flockes, vnto whom ſhe ſhall turne, if Chriſt doe not teach her, then the Maiſters of falſe worſhip are called the companions of Chriſt, is not that a dignitie ouer-great for ſuch wicked men? For anſwer vnto this we muſt note that ſhe doth not call them ſo, giuing vnto them thereby any dignitie, but rather noting thereby what wicked vſurpers they bee. For Chriſt is the onely Maſter, the onely ſhepheard, the only teacher of the true worſhip of God: and all ſuch as ſet vp a worſhip and a doctrine of their owne, aduaunce themſelues euen to bee his companions. Such a companion is the Pope, for hee doth take vpon him

him to frame a religion, and ſtandeth to maintaine that it is of equall authoritie with the religion of Chriſt. But wee are taught here to ſeeke vnto the Lord Ieſus, that he may ſhew vnto vs where he feedeth his flocke, that wee may ioyne with the ſame and bee fed by him, and ſo kept, that we decline not to the flockes of ſuch companions. The Lord giue vs that grace. Amen

Let vs pray.

THE

THE SECOND SERMON.

CHAP. I

8 *If thou know not, O thou faireſt among women, get thee forth by the ſteps of the flocke, and feed thy kids by the tents of the ſhepheards.*

9 *I haue compared thee my loue, vnto the troupe of horſes in the chariots of Pharaoh.*

10 *Thy cheekes are comely with rowes of ſtones, and thy necke with chaines.*

11 *Wee will make thee borders of gold with ſtuds of ſiluer.*

12 *While the King was at his repaſt, my ſpiknard gaue the ſmell thereof.*

13 *My welbeloued is as a bundle of mirrh vnto me, he ſhall lodge betweene my breaſts.*

14 *My welbeloued is as a cluſter of Camphire vnto me in the vines of Engedie.*

15 *My loue, behold thou art faire, thine eyes are like the doues.*

My

16 *My welbeloued, behold thou art faire and pleasant, also our bed is greene.*

17 *The beames of our house are Cedars, the rafters are of Firre.*

THe speeches of the bride seeking after her Welbeloued, are past in the former part of this chapter; & now we shal heare what the bridegrom saith, for he answereth in 4 verses, & each doth cõmend the other by course. Her last request which shee made vnto him was this that *he would shew her where hee feedeth, and where he causeth the flocke to lie down at noon.* And vnto this hee doth frame his first speech in most kind and louing manner, thus: *If thou knowe not* (saith hee) *O thou fairest among women.* The very forme of his speech doth seeme to importe thus much: That it is a strange thing, that shee doth not know where he feedeth his flocke: for hath he not from the beginning fed his Church, so as the Church hath knowne how and where he hath fed her? Yes doubtlesse, but yet the false teachers haue oftentimes so preuailed, and haue so confidetly challenged to themselues the name and title of the true Church, and the true knowledge hath beene oftentimes so darkned, that the poore sheepe of Christ haue not knowne almost

moſt which way to turne them, being in danger of ioyning themſelues to the flockes of thoſe companions, but that they haue had their refuge in flying vnto Chriſt to be taught the trueth by him. Partly indeed (as it cannot bee denied) by negligence theſe things come to paſſe: but Chriſt doth not vpbraid her with that, but doth verie readily inſtruct her, as we ſhall ſee in that which followeth. Then further that he calleth her, *the fayreſt among women*, you may ſee how beautifull & comely ſhee is in his ſight. Howſoeuer ſhee ſeemeth in her own eyes to be blacke (as all the faithfull are priuie to their own deformities) & howſoeuer others do deſpiſe her while they doe eſteeme her to be voide of beautie: yet vnto Chriſt ſhe is the fayreſt of all other. Great flocks there haue beene in the world of ſundrie profeſſions, and goodly glory & externall ornaments they haue been decked withal: but their beauty in the eyes of the Lord, is nothing comparable to the beautie of his ſpouſe, who is baſe in outward ſhew, but yet by her ſpiritual ornamentes ſhe excelleth them all, ſo that hee calleth her *the fayreſt among women*. This is a wonderful comfort vnto euery faithful ſoule, when the Diuel in time of temptation ſhal ſuggeſt after this manner: Thou art ſpotted and defiled with many ſinnes & offences: thou art foule, thou art black, thou art deformed: how ſhould the moſt holie and glorious Lord Ieſus delight in thee? Conſider

thy ſelf, what reaſon haſt thou to think that thou ſhalt bee married vnto him? Yea what ſhould perſwade thee, that he regardeth thy praiers? that the voice of Chriſt is this: *O thou fayreſt among women*. What would we haue more? when wee are ſo full of deformities, yet faire in his eyes. But how then? is that which is blacke faire in the eyes of Chriſt? No verily, for he can approue nothing that is vncleane; but he beholdeth the beautie of his ſpouſe ſo farre as ſhe is regenerate and decked with vertues: & as for her blacknes and deformities, they ſhall bee wholy taken away. So hee beholdeth her iuſtified and ſanctified in himſelf. And thus much touching his kind ſpeech: and now let vs ſee what anſwere he maketh vnto her requeſt. Shee doth entreate him of all loue to ſhew her where he feedeth his flocke, that ſhee may ioyne her ſelfe there to bee fed with them, vnder him, and by him her onely ſhepheard. And marke what he biddeth her doe, that ſhe may obtaine her deſire herein. *Goe forth* (ſaith he) *by the ſteps of the flocke, and feed thy kids by the tents of the ſhepheards* Is this the way to find him where he feedeth, and where he cauſeth his flock to lie down at noone? Is this a ſufficient anſwere to her requeſt? Yea doubtleſſe, Chriſt anſwereth her deſire to the full: let vs therfore conſider the ſenſe of his words, for they inſtruct vs in a moſt waighty matter. Some

doe

doe translate them thus: *Seeing thou knoweſt not, O thou faireſt among women, go forth, ſtay not in the footſteps of that flocke, and feed thy kids aboue the tents of other ſhepheards.* As if he ſhould will her to come away from thoſe flocks of his companions, as ſhe called them, & not walk in their waies: for albeit they in their blind deuotion pretēd to worſhip God, indeed they worſhip diuels. And ſeeing the doctrines & religions of thoſe companions be from mans inuention, and ſo are of the earth here below, yea euen from the pit of hel, ſhee muſt feed her kids aboue the tēts of thoſe other ſhepheards, ſhee muſt leade them into the heauenly paſtures. This is a godly ſenſe, but I doe not ſee how the words will beare it in this place. Indeed the preposition, *gnal*, ſignifieth indifferently, aboue, vpon, or beſide, as to ſay aboue the tents, or beſide the tēts. But in the other words there is a very hard eclipſe, when the words are plainly ſet down thus, *go forth in the ſteps of the flocke*, to ſay. *go forth, ſtay not, or walke not in the ſteps of the flock.* And moreouer we are not to note that in her vehement ſuit vnto Chriſt he would ſhew her where he feedeth, ſhe ſaith, *Why ſhould I be as one that turneth aſide to the flockes of thy companions?* Shee ſaith not to the flocke. The falſe worſhippers bee many flockes, and ſo ſhee calleth them: for they differ in their religion each from other. If Chriſt then had ſpoken of theſe, hee would haue called them flockes, as ſhee did, and not a flocke. Hee would haue ſaid,

goe forth, walke not in the steps of those flockes which thou speakest of. The true Church in deed consisteth of many seuerall flocks, if wee respect the diuersitie of times & places: but if wee respect the vnitie of their faith, & how they be made one mistical body of Christ, they bee al but one flocke. Againe, we finde in the holy Scriptures, that hypocrites and counterfayte worshippers are called goates, yea, they bee euen heardes of swine, or rather wolues, and such like cruell beastes, wee find them not called sheepe, as the Lordes people are called his sheepe. Now in this place the words do stand thus: goe forth in the steps of the sheepe. I take it therefore verie cleere, that he speaketh of the people of God, saying: *go forth in the steps of the sheepe.* If thou wilt finde me where I doe feede my sheepe, that thou maist ioyn with them to become one flock, goe forth in their steps, and feede thy kids by the tents of the shepheards. Here is the way for all the faithfull to finde where the greate shepheard of the sheepe our Lord Iesus feedeth his flocke then let vs consider diligently of it, that we may follow his direction. It is the Church which maketh her praier, that he would shew vnto her where he feedeth. What flocke doth he feed besides the Church? is not shee his onely flocke? What other sheepe then are those whose steps she must trace to find where he feedeth? Indeed the Church is but one, and Christ feedeth none other

flock

flock beſides her: but you muſt obſerue, that is the prayer of the Church euer vppon earth: *Shew mee, O thou whome my ſoule loueth, where thou feedeſt.* And there be which were vpon earth in fromer time, which are gone out of the world. Theſe are the ſheep in whoſe ſteps he willeth her to goe foorth: and by the ſteps of theſe ſhe ſhall come to find where the wholeſome paſture is. The caſe ſtandeth thus: There is but one true faith, one holy religion, and worſhip of God, one pure doctrine, one ſpirituall foode or paſture for all that come to life. Although it hath not beene deliuered at all times a like, or vnder one forme: for the Fathers vnder the Law had all figures & ſhadowes, which the Goſpell layeth open clearely. Hereupon it followeth, that when there ariſe Sectmaiſters, Heretikes, and falſe teachers, which draw flocks of Diſciples after them, and each company boaſteth that they be the true Church, and now the faithfull in the middeſt of theſe con[illegible]ns, crie out vnto Chriſt to ſhew them where he doth feed: his direction is this; goe forth in the ſteps of the ſheep, looke into the wayes of the ancient Churches, looke what doctrine and what religion they profeſſed, looke what ſhepheardes fed them, ioyne your ſelues to the tents of the ſame ſhepheardes, and feede in the ſame paſture. Here then bee two things chiefly to be conſidered, which alſo muſt not be parted aſunder, the ſteppes of the ſheep, &

the Tentes of the Shepheards : for there is a great controuerſie betweene vs and the Romiſh Church. They call vs Schiſmatikes, and we ſtand to maintaine that they be the Synagogue of Antichriſt, the great whore of Babell, the mother of whoredomes and abominations of the earth, an idolatrous ſtrumpet. To the triall we come, they crie out for the ſteps of the ancient flockes, and the tents of the ancient Shepheards that fed them, and ſo doe wee. Herein we doe conſent : but yet when we come to the point, wee differ as farre as light and darkneſſe. For whereas wee looke vnto the ſteps of Abraham, Izhak and Iacob, and other holy men, whome the Scripture commendeth, wee looke vnto the faith, the doctrine and the religion of Moſes and the Prophets, yea of the Apoſtles and Martyrs of Chriſt Ieſus, wee looke how they worſhipped, and how they liued, as the Sacred Hiſtories of the Bible doe ſet forth vnto vs : for if the word of God did not teſtifie of them, how ſhould we know their ſteps to bee the ſteppes of Chriſts flocke ? Alſo we looke who were the Shepheardes vnder Chriſt in auncient time, euen the Prophets and the Apoſtles, wee looke vnto their tents, and by them wee ſeeke for paſture : Wee looke onely vnto the written word which is deliuered vnto vs from God by them: for their writings are as the Shepheards tents erected, and there onely is the wholeſome foode: there be the greene paſtures, there we ioyne ous

ſelues

ſelues vnto the true ſheepe of Chriſt: this is our courſe, as Chriſt here willeth; The Papiſt wil none of this: but they will let paſſe the ſteps of Abraham, Izhak, and Iaakob, of the Patriarks & Prophets, of the Apoſtles, & other holy men of whom the word of God beareth witneſſe: they will not allow that the writings of the Prophets and Apoſtles ſhall be the tents of theſe ſhepheards, of whom Chriſt ſpeaketh: they hold not that to bee the only holeſome paſture, with which they feed Gods people: And they will haue men looke to the ſteps of certaine Popes, Cardinals, Monkes, Friers, and a deale of ſuch vermine, which for the ſpace of ſome fiue or ſixe hundreth yeares hath crawled vpon the earth, They ſend vs to the decrees of Popes and popiſh Prelates, and to their owne conſtitutions, there will they haue the tents of the Shepheards to bee, and the wholeſome paſtures. What a blindneſſe is it in all thoſe which cannot ſee that theſe be very theeues and murtherers? For when Chriſt willeth vs to goe forth by the ſteppes of the ſheepe, and to feede by the tents of the Shepheards: what ſheepe but thoſe whome hee hath giuen teſtimonie vnto by his word, that they were his faithfull worſhippers? where ſhall wee ſeeke the Church but in the holy Scriptures of the Apoſtles and Prophets? When he ſpeaketh of the tents of the Shepheards which fed and guided thoſe ancient flockes, whom ſhall we take then to be but onely thoſe whom he hath

declared to bee his seruantes? euen the holie Apostles and Prophets? Then marke these popish seducers. They teach many strange doctrines contrary to the doctrine of the Apostles & Prophets, euen doctrines of Diuels. They worship Idols, and haue a thousand superstitions: and when they should proue them, that men may come to ioyne with the auncient people of God, & to feed by the tents of those faithfull shepheards: they stand by the way side, and when they see that they wil proue their doctrine and worship by auncient shepheards & steppes of the flocke, & lead them vnto by-lanes vnto their owne companies and number them. For they haue nothing to proue their doctrine & worshippe but their owne authorities. Such a Pope, so many Cardinals, and Councels decree this & that, they cannot erre, therefore we must believe it. Here is all their proofe. But let vs leave these wicked companions, & heare what Christ sayeth now further vnto his beloued Spouse.

We haue seene how vehement her desire is in seeking after him, and now he sheweth how much the same pleaseth him: for the commendation which he giueth vnto her, is drawn from thence. But see now vnder what comparison hee prayseth her. *I haue likened thee my loue,* (saith he) *vnto the troupe of horses, which is in the Charriottes of Pharaoh. Thy cheekes are comely with rowes of stones, & thy necke with chaines.* A troupe of horses, being

the

the horſes alſo of a mighty King, and furniſhed for the warre; decked with rowes of precious ſtones vpon their cheeks, as the manner of the Egyptians and other countries was, with chaines of gold about their necks, was [illegible] goodly light: now vnto theſe he compareth his Spouſe, with her ſpiritual decking & ornaments, as it were with rowes of goodly precious ſtones and chaines. But herein you muſt note that the troupe of horſes in the chariots of Pharao were ſtrong, cheerefull, prompt and ready to the warre: and herein the Church is compared vnto them. It may be ſaid, [illegible] holy virgin as a troupe of horſes to the warre? Is ſhe for warre? Yes, [illegible] militant, that is the Church warring [illegible] againſt whome ſhe warreth are [illegible] principalities and powers, they be the [illegible] of the darkenes of this world. Her warre is againſt al the Diuels of hell: ſhe ſeeketh vnto Chriſt, and hee hath armed her with ſpirituall armour to vanquiſh them all. Vnto this battaile ſhe is prepared, ſhe is adorned, ſhe is prompt and readie, ſhee is full of fortitude and valour; the troup of horſes in the chariots of King Pharaoh, are not comparable vnto her. They bee ſtrong and wiſe, & ready to the battaile, but they be but fleſh. They be decked and ſet forth with rowes and precious ſtones vpon their cheekes, and with gold chaines about their neckes, theſe be things corruptible. Her ſtrength is ſpirituall, and againſt

againſt ſpiritual enemies: her ornaments which are likned vnto rowes of precious ſtones be alſo ſpiritual. And ſhe is cõmended for her fortitude which he hath armed her withal, euen that armor of God as S *Paul* calleth it, *Epheſ.* 6. We ſee thẽ that al that long after the Lord Ieſus, looſe not their labor in ſeeking vnto him: for he decketh thẽ with heauenly ornaments, maketh them valiant & ſtrong in his own power to fight & to preuail againſt the mightieſt enemies, euen the Diuels of hel. Let this ſtirre vs vp to ſeeke after him continually. Hee is our ſtrength & fortitude, hee is our refuge & defence, through him, as S. *Paul* ſaith, wee are more then conquerors. And vſing the graces & gifts well wch he beſtoweth vpon vs, we ſhall receiue more: for mark what he promiſeth in the words that follow. *We wil make thee borders of gold with ſtuds of ſiluer.* You ſee that theſe words are a promiſe, & indeed as it is manifeſt, a promiſe of further rich ornamẽts. She is richly decked alreadie, but her decking ſhall be yet more. She ſhall haue the moſt excellent ornaments of gold & ſiluer, which wrought together do ſet forth each other. Indeed by theſe, the heauenly graces of the holy Ghoſt are ſignified. But who are they which ſhall make and put vpon her theſe goodly iewels? for hee ſaith not, I will make thee, but *we wil make thee borders of gold with ſtuds of ſiluer.* Who are they whom the bridgrome here ioyneth with himſelfe in this worke? Are they his

friends,

ſriends, the holy Apoſtles and prophets? Indeed they as inſtruments haue decked & beautified the Church, with the rich and coſtly ornaments which were deliuered vnto them for to put vpon her, and therefore it may after a ſort be ſpoken of them. But more fully it is to be vnderſtood of the three perſons in the glorious Trinitie, the Father, the Son and the holy Ghoſt: for al theſe do deck and beautifie the Church. The Father hath giuen his Son to be the Sauiour of the world, & with him, or rather in him, all good things. The Son hath wrought all righteouſnes and finiſhed all things which concerne our redemption. And the holie Ghoſt maketh vs partakers of the ſame. Thus you ſee what a promiſe is made vnto the church: ſhe hath goodly rich iewels beſtowed vpon her, and more coſtly ſhe ſhall haue, euen vntill ſhe come to the full and perfect beautie, which ſhe ſhall haue in the heauens. Let vs then take comfort in this promiſe, & ſet our hearts conſtantly and zealouſly to ſeeke the Lord, ſeeing it is a thing ſo pleaſing in his ſight: haſt thou receiued ſpirituall decking in thy ſoule? Seeke Chriſt and thou ſhalt haue more, for here is a promiſe.

Now the Church ſpeaketh againe, ſetting forth by three compariſons the excellent ſweetnes of Chriſt Ieſus, her moſt louing Spouſe, namely of *Spikenarde, Camphire and Myrrhe*. But there is ſome hardnes in the firſt ſentence of her ſpeech, which

which is thus translated. *While the King was at his repaste, my spikenard gaue the smell thereof.* That which is translated *his repast*, may be taken *his sitting*, for the manner was in banquetts to sit round, and so the word is vsed more generally. The sense may be taken two wayes: for if we take it after our translatiō, then she speaketh of the King with her in banquet here vppon earth: Christ is said to feast and banquet with the godly while they liue here. For thus he sayeth: *Behold I stand at the dore and knocke, if any heare my voice and open, I will come in and suppe with him, and hee with mee.* Reuel. 3. vers. 20. If we take it thus, while the King is in his sitting, that is while he yet sitteth in the heauens, then is there a secret comparison to the setting forth of his wonderfull & vnspeakeable sweetnes. As if shee should say, euen now while the King my welbeloued is sitting in the heauens, compassed about with his holy Angels, and I here vpon the earth below, there is a wonderfull distance betwene vs, & yet the sweet sauour of him commeth vnto me, yea I do smel his sweetnesse, euen as it were the pretious spikenard, Mirrhe and Camphyre. How great is his sweetnes that commeth vnto me through this distance? How sweete & delightsome shall he bee vnto me, when I shall dwel with him in the heauens? But it flatlie gaine-saieth this sense which followeth, if wee take the words, as they be in our english translation, namely thus, my

spikenard

spiknard gaue the smel therof. For thē the Church commendeth her own sweetnes, by saying, *my spiknarde gaue the smel therof.* Doubtles she prayseth here the sweetnes of Christ, and therefore seeing the words do indifferently beare it, because the letter which is the article sometime formeth the adiectiue, I take it to be the rightest way to translate it thus: *That which is of spiknarde gaue the smel therof.* For as I sayd by *Spiknarde, Myrrhe*, and *Camphire*, she setteth forth how sweete Christ is vnto her. In the next verse she likeneth him vnto a *bundle of Myrrhe*, and saieth, *that he shall remaine betweene her breastes.* In our speech a bundle is of some waight: but the word which is here vsed, signifieth not onely such a bundle, but also any little bunch of flowers or sweetes that are bound together. She compareth him therfore vnto a bunch of Myrrhe, or Nosegay (as we cal it) such as they vse to make of the sweetest flowers, which the maidens did set in their bosomes betwen their breasts, and so they haue the sweet sauour alwaies in their nose. So this holy virgin, the spouse of Christ, feeling her welbeloued to be so sweet vnto her, saith, that he is as a bunch of sweet Myrrhe, and that she will set him in her bosome, euen betweene her breasts, and there he shall remaine, that she may alwaies smel his sweetnes. In the third place shee saith, *he is to her as a Cluster of Camphire or of Cyprus*, a very *sweet thing*: and

euen as the ſweeteſt of that kind, which grew in the vines of Engedie. Is Chriſt Ieſus as the Bride here ſaith of him? Is he ſo repleniſhed with ſweetnes, that euen from the high heauens he perfumeth the whole world with moſt excellent ſweet ſmell? How is it then that the Spouſe ſaith, it is vnto her? Do none feele this ſweetnes but ſhe? Doubtles the Church onely hath the right ſenſe how ſweet the Lord is. She, euen all the elect, the redeemed and ſanctified in Chriſt, doe feele the free remiſſion of ſinnes and reconciliation to God, from whence ariſeth a ſweete peace and ſpirituall ioy. Through faith ſhee apprehendeth him who is her ſanctifier, he is fixed in her heart, euen in her breſt, and ſo hee maketh her continually to feele his ſweet ſauour. The children of this world doe ſmell the ſweete ſauour of many earthly things, and doe verie much delight therein: but the ſweetneſſe of Chriſt they doe not ſmell. This is no maruaile: for let the ſunne ſhine neuer ſo bright, yet hee that is blinde perceiueth it not. And let him that is without the ſenſe of ſmelling come among ſweete ſauours, yet hee feeleth nothing. The Lord Ieſus is preached, and as it were the box of precious oyntment powred forth into the world, ſo that the whole ayre is as it were perfumed with his ſweete ſauour: but many are ſo ſtuffed with euill ſauours, euen with the ſtinking ſauours of carnall luſtes, which yet ſeeme moſt delightſome vnto them, as that they cannot

not smell any spirituall sweetnesse. When the faithfull are euen rauished in the minde with the sauour of him that commeth vnto them, those other are nothing moued. They sauour the things which are of the flesh, and not the things which are of God. Here is a place then, by which euery one of vs may trie himselfe, whether we be in the right way or not. You see plainely, what the mother of all Gods children saith, how sweet Christ is vnto her, and how her heart is euen set vpon him, shee sixeth him in her breast, that shee may continually be refreshed with his sweetnesse: this is the state of euerie true Christian soule. Then if thy heart bee set vpon the cares and pleasures of this world, if thou bee earthly minded, bewaile thine estate, for what shall it auaile thee to boast of Christianitie, when thou shalt be found to bee but a counterfeit Christian? But if thou findest that being stinking and loathsome in thy selfe, and that the Lord Iesus doth perfume thee with his sweetnes, so that thy heart for loue of him dispiseth vncleane lusts and carnall pleasures, aspiring vnto the heauens where thy treasure and thy ioy is, then art thou most happie, it is with thee as the holy spouse here speaketh. And knowe this, that if thou wilt fixe Christ, euen as it were a bunch of sweet Mirrhe in thy breast, thou hast none other way to doe it, *but by meditation in the holy word of God day and night.* Psalme 1. For why is it that *Dauid* saith of the holy word of god

that

that *it it were to bee desired then golde, yea then much fine golde, sweeter then the honey or the honey combe. Psal. 19.* But that through the word he felt all the sweetnes from Christ, deriued vnto him. The words in themselues can be but words, and not so rich, nor so sweet: but as they be the conduit pipes, or as it were, certain vessels or instruments, by which the heauenly riches are conueyed into our hearts, they be more to be desired then gold, and sweeter then honey. We apprehend Christ Iesus, and are ingrafted into him through a true and liuely faith. *That faith* (as the holy Apostle teacheth) *commeth by hearing, and hearing by the words of God. Rom. 10.* It is not then possible for these men to feele any sweet smell of Christ Iesus our blessed Lord, which feel no sweetnes in the liuely oracles of God. They may haue certain fantasies and imaginations: but as for any power of Christ, for mortification of sin, or for quickening vnto vertues, there is none at all. They be not perfumed, Christ is not vnto them as a cluster of Camphire, or as a bundle of Myrrhe in their bosome, neither doth his sweetnes come vnto the, as Spiknard. Let vs beloued, be careful to differ fro such, by feeling that which the bride sayeth here.

In the next words the Bridegroome speaketh again, commending and praysing, and that very highly, the beautie of his Bride. *Behold thou art faire, my loue,* (sayeth he) *behold thou art faire, thine*

eyes

yet are as the Doues. It is the whole desire of the Church to bee welfauoured, comely and beautifull in the eyes of Christ. If he accept of her, it is all in all, what can shee desire more? A singular ioy it must needes be then vnto her, to vnderstand for certaintie that shee is beautifull indeede in his sight. And therefore the Lord to cheere her, doth pronounce in manner, as you haue heard, that shee is faire. And now for the manner of his speech, hee saith, *behold thou art faire.* The Scripture vseth this word *behold*, when it will stirre vp the mindes of men to consider some rare, some excellent or wonderfull matter. As, *Behold a Virgin shall beare a child &c. Behold the day of the Lord shall come, &c.* So then by this manner of speech Christ here declareth that the Church his spouse is exceeding beautifull in his sight. Then further, to amplifie the matter, see how he doubleth his speech, saying, *Behold thou art faire my loue, behold thou art faire.* This is to shew that her beautie indeed doth excell; for it doth expresse a vehemencie of minde, when the speech is so doubled. If we speake of a man which we take to be starke nought, we doe not, if we vtter our mindes to any, satisfie our selues by saying, he is nought: but we will say, he is nought, he is nought. And so by doubling the speech, we would haue knowne that we take him to be exceeding nought, euen such as we can

hardly expresse with words. In like manner when we will expresse the rare excellency of any thing, we vse to say, it is excellent, it is excellent. Euen so our Lord Iesus Christ saith here to his Church, *Behold thou art faire my loue, behold thou art faire.* declaring thereby that she is not onely faire, but wonderfull faire and glorious in his sight. Let the world iudge of her how they will, esteeming her as base and deformed, (for the world cannot behold the spirituall beauty and heauenly ornaments) yet she is precious and goodly before the Lord. We may triumph in this, euen so many as vnfainedly loue the Lord Iesus: that we are so comely and pleasing in his eyes. But it may be said, is there not a lumpe of sinne? Are there not many soule spots and deformities in the most faithfull soules while they liue heere? Is that which is polluted and defiled with sinne, beautifull and comely in the eyes of the Lord Iesus? Can any thing be so faire vnto him which is full of blemishes? To this I answere, as before I answered, that the Lord Iesus beholdeth the vertues and comely graces wherewith his beloued Spouse is decked: he doth not regard her spots and deformities, *because he will wash them away, and make her a glorious Church to himselfe, not hauing spot or wrinckle.* Ephes. 5. What may more encourage vs then this to come vnto Christ? The Diuell will tell thee thus: what doest thou seeking

seeking after Christ? he is high, beautifull and glorious, he is most holy and pure. Thou doest but lose thy labour, he will not regard thee which art sinfull, spotted and deformed. Wouldest thou be loyned vnto him? Cease from calling vpon him, valesse thou mightest be better welcome vnto him. To repell all such temptations of the enemie, remember what the Lord saith heere vnto his Church, *Behold thou art faire my loue, behold thou art faire.* For looke what he speaketh to the whole Church, he speaketh vnto euerie sinfull soule. Is there faith, is there repentance, is there true loue, zeale, humility and meeknesse? Although there be remains of corruption, and a mixture of diuers infirmities, yet this is not taken away, *Behold thou art faire my loue, behold thou art faire.* Find out then those ornaments in thy selfe, and though they be not perfect or full, yet be sure they be in truth, and come boldly vnto him, so louing a Sauiour, and reioyce in his loue.

That clause which followeth, doth yet further extoll her beautie, when he saith, *Thine eyes are like the Doues.* The chiefe beauty is in the face: for let there be neuer so good shape and proportion, if there be not a well fauoured face, all is lost. Againe, in the face the eie is very much either for beautie or deformitie. Now the doue hath a goodly eye, and therefore in great commendation of his Spouse, Christ saith, *that her eies are*

like doues eyes. Furthermore, the eye of the doue is simple and chast: and therefore in this comparison Christ doth besides the beautie set forth also the chast simplicitie of his spouse. The chastitie of virgins is much to be commended, and a thing requisite for all Christians to possesse their vessels in holinesse. This speaketh of the bodily chastitie. But there is also a spirituall chastitie in which the Church is said to be a chast and pure virgin vnto Christ: as there is a spirituall whoredome often complained of, & condemned in the Scriptures. Then as in marriage the Bridegroome doth much delight in the chastitie and simplicitie of his Bride: so the faithfull soule being married vnto Christ, there is chastitie required. She may not follow after others, or commit whoredome with them: but she must keepe her loue, her faith, and her affection whole and entire towards him alone. They that embrace the doctrines and religions of men, worshipping stockes and stones, yea Diuels, haue not Doues eyes, they be not chast, but doe commit abominable whoredome, as the word of God doth charge them. *Such as imbrace this world be called adulterers and adulteresses*, Iam. 4. vers. 4. then their eyes be not as the eyes of the Doue. They make riches their God: for they haue set their heart vpon them. And therefore S. *Paul* saith, that *couetousnes is idolatrie*, Col. 3. vers. 5. He then that

that will be beautifull in the sight of the Lord, must haue doues eyes: she must with the single eye of faith worship him in spirit and truth, euen as he prescribeth in his holy word: he must loue him and stay vpon him, and not vpon riches. What then are the eyes of the Church? That indeed may be demaunded. *The eye* (as our Sauiour teacheth, Matth. 6.) *is the light of the bodie.* And without the eye there is nothing but darkenes in the bodie. The eye then of the soule is the light of the soule, and that is true and liuely faith. Where faith is not, there is nothing but darknes, and by faith we behold God. But *without faith*, (as it is written, Heb. 11.) *it is impossible to please God.* The delight then which our Lord God taketh in his seruants, is in the beautie of this eye of faith. Let vs then labour daily for increase of the holy faith, that we may be more and more beautifull: for the beautie thereof shall neuer decay. Thus we see how the Bridegroome hath praised his Bride, and now she rendreth the like to him. *Behold thou art faire my welbeloued, and pleasant, also our bed is greene.* It is verie true that the Bride is faire, he telleth so which cannot lie: but she reflecteth not in her own beautie, which neither she hath of her selfe, neither yet is of the greatest. For first of all this is cleare, that she hath all her beautie and ornaments from him, it is hee that *washeth her, & maketh her glorious* Ephes. 5. Again,

though the beautie and glory of the heauenly new Ierusalem be exceeding great, as it is set forth, Reuel. 21. yet the glorie of the Bridegroome exceedeth it farre: for he is the fountaine of all glory and beautie. And therefore she returneth this praise vpon him, that he indeed is faire and comely. Who can set forth the glory of Christ? who can describe his beautie and comelinesse? There is in him, or as S. *Paul* saith, *there dwelleth in him all fulnesse of the Godhead bodily*: Colos. 2. vers. 9. All the faithfull, euen the sanctified, doe glorie in their beauties: but yet so, *as they know that they haue all from him, and so indeed as they glorie in him*, 1. Cor. 1. vers. 31. *Behold thou art faire my welbeloued* and comely. Vnto this fountaine then (who is made vnto vs of God, wisedome, righteousnesse, sanctification, and redemption) we are to haue recourse. This most glorious beautie of the Lord, is not seene, nor felt of any but the faithfull. The world hath no benefit thereby, and therefore the world hath no ioy nor delight to praise him. Were it not for the most excellent beautie of Christ, the Church had beene in euill case. Then she addeth, *also our bed is greene*. She is a virgin, and yet she is the mother of all Gods children: for *Ierusalem from aboue*, (saith Paul) *is free, which is the mother of vs all*. Galath. 4. vers. 26. So many as haue God their Father, haue the Church their mother.

When

When she saith then, *our bed is greene*, she speaketh of procreation in that heauenly and spirtual birth. The greennesse doth signifie florishing and fresh springing of those goodly plants which are borne of God. I need not stand heere to handle this doctrine of regeneration, how the elect are begotten of God in the new birth, by the immortall seede, euen by the word of truth: and that this birth is in Christ, for we often deale in those points. Therefore a word or or two that which remaineth.

The beames of our house are Cedars, the rafters are of Firrhe. Whether this be the speech of the Bride alone, as it may seeme, or whether it be vttered by them both, it is not much materiall to be stood vpon. Heere is commended their house which they dwell in: and the commendation is from the matter which it is built of, euen Cedars and Firrhe. These kinds of wood are durable, and commodious otherwise. That word which is translated rafters, is rather to be taken for gallerie, or goodly walks, which were wont to be vpon the tops of kings Pallaces. But what is this palace? Is it to be taken for the heauens, in which they shall for euer dwell together? I suppose rather that it is meant of an house, while she is yet in the world. What house then? Surely the church herselfe, is the temple of the liuing God. Euerie faithfull soule is the habitation of Christ. And

therefore

therefore the holy Prophet in the Psalme, calleth vpon men to open the dores of their heart to receiue in Christ: *Lift vp your heads ye gates, and be yee lift vp yee euerlasting dores, and the King of glory shall come in.* Psal. 24. And thus we haue had, as I may say, one song betweene these louers. Let vs pray.

THE THIRD SERMON.

CAAP. II.

1 *I am the rose of the field, and the lilie of the valleys.*

2 *Like a lilie among the thornes, so is my loue among the daughters.*

3 *Like as the apple tree among the trees of the forrest, so is my welbeloued among the sonnes: vnder his shadow I had delight, and sate downe, and his fruite was sweete vnto my mouth.*

4 *He brought me into the house of wine, and loue was his banner ouer me.*

5 *Stay me with flagons, and comfort me with apples, for I am sicke of loue.*

6 *His left hand is vnder my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.*

7 *I charge you, O daughters of Ierusalem, by the roes, and by the hindes of the field, that ye stirre not vp nor wake my loue, vntill she please.*

If

IF this bee called the Song of Songs, not only for the excellencie, but also, as some suppose it may, because it doth containe in it divers Songs; then have we finished one Song in the former chapter, and here we have another in this chapter. The Bride did begin the former, and now let us see which of them doth begin the Song. The Pronoun (*ani*) which signifieth in our tongue, *I*, is common both to man and woman, as I suppose, so that we cannot bee deceived by the forme of speech whether of them saith, *I am the rose of Sharon, and the lillie of the valleis*. Moreover, the Lord Iesus and his Church are both of them sweet, faire, comely, and beautifull, yea so sweet, and so exceeding beautifull, that all the sweetest roses & whitest lilies in the world are not comparable vnto them. If he be called the rose & the lillie, it is most true, he is so. And if the Church be likned vnto them, it is a fit comparison. Can it not then (may some man say) be gathered which of them speaketh this? Yes verily it is out of doubt, that Christ speaketh this of himselfe, saying, *I am the rose of Sharon, and the lillie of the valleis*. Hee doth in this set forth his owne praise. The Church doth not speake it: for then she should praise her selfe, which is not meet. If you will say, may not the Church praise her selfe? how then

doth

doth Christ praise himselfe? This is easily answered. Christ Jesus is the fountaine of all goodnes, he is worthy all praise, and may rightly praise himselfe, as he doth in the Gospell say, *I am bee the bread of life, and he is the light of the world.* The Church hath all her holines & beautie from Christ, she may not praise her selfe. *No man is to praise himselfe.* Prou. 17. ver. 2. If any man shal reply that the Church did in the former Chapter praise her selfe, saying, *that she is blacke, but yet comely, &c.* I answere, that she was forced thereunto, least by those that take occasion to depraue her, the weak might stumble, and be made to despise her. Saint Paul (as you know) was constrained to praise himselfe, lest his doctrine should be defaced. 2. Cor. 11. The false Apostles which sought all occasions to discredit him, did force him therunto and he sayeth *that he dealt therein after the manner of fooles.* Then we may see, that as the Bride began the former Song, setting foorth the excellencie of her Bridegrome, and her desire to be with him as the author and very fountaine of all her joy and happinesse: so here the bridegrome beginneth first praising himself, and then he commendeth his dearely beloued Spouse. Here be a couple praised, even a Bridegrome and his bride, both of them excellent, fayre, sweete, goodly and pure. Yea they resemble each the other: for he is as the lillie, & she is so likewise. But

he

he is praised first, because he is the very fountaine, all fulnesse of sweet things is in him: and from him she receiueth all her goodnes, beautie and puritie. Without him, what are all the children of Adam? Are not all defiled? Are not all corrupt and abhominable? Yea, doe not all lie vnder sinne, euen ouerwhelmed in the stinking mudde of vncleannes? Then that the Church is a lillie, she hath it from him, who saith, *I am the lillie of the valleyes.* And marke how the Lord it set forth vnto vs by two goodly flowers, *the rose* and *the lillie.* They be sweet, and they be beautifull: *Salomon in all his royaltie not like them.* Matth. 6. So our Lord is holy, he is pure, he is innocent, he is full of all beautie and glory. And it is to be noted, that he compareth himselfe to the goodliest rose and the sweetest, and to the fairest lilly: for he saieth, *I am the rose of Sharon*, which was a goodly fruitful place mentioned in diuers places of the Scripture, in which, as it appeareth by this place, the rose did excell: and the lillie of the vallies is the fairest. Behold here what a Sauiour wee haue to come vnto: how comfortable and delightsome is he, how soft and gentle? How is he to be coueted, to be loued and imbraced? And why doth he publish this praise of himselfe, but to draw vs vnto him? Why are wee so dull hearted, and so negligent in seeking to be ioyned vnto him? What is there vnder the Sunne that

should

should stay vs from such a Saviour? Lord make vs to behold thy glorious beautie, and to smell this sweete sauour, that wee may come vnto thee.

Let vs come to the next verse, *Like a lillie among the thornes, so is my loue among the daughters.* This praise the Lord giueth of his Church: but as I said before, that she is as the faire, sweet and soft lillie, she hath it from him. *Of his fulnesse we all receiue, euen grace for grace*, Iohn 1. And therfore when he had said, I am the lillie of the vallies, he addeth by and by, that his loue is as the lillie. She is made righteous in him, she is cloathed with his innocencie and obedience: she is made faire and beautifull in him. But we must obserue how he setteth her forth here by a comparison, which consisteth of foure *termes*, as they call them, *the lillie, the thornes, his loue, and the daughters.* The sence may be taken two wayes: at first, some haue taken it that hee setteth foorth the state and condition of the Church, in which she is here in the world touching afflictions. As to say, like the soft lillie, which groweth among the thornes, is pricked of them: so my spouse, my loue is pricked, and afflicted of the daughters among whom she dwelleth. This is a true doctrine, for there be sundrie assemblies of diuers religions in the world & euery one doth challenge to be the true Church, and so all take vpon them

Church

to be the daughters of the most high, and so the title is giuen vnto them, though they be not so in deed. All these doe hate and persecute the true Church, and are euen like thornes in her side. Thus I say, some haue expounded this place, and it is true, but not the sense of this place. It is not the meaning of Christ here to shew the affliction of his spouse, or the hard condition that she is in, but to magnifie her excellent beautie. For the comparison is made thus. The Churches of Idolaters make a goodly externall shew, and there seemeth to be a great pompe and glory, so that to themselues they seeme to bee beautifull and goodly: but my loue excelleth them, as farre as the sweet white lillie excelleth the thornes. So that this worde *among* is taken in comparison. Set a lillie in comparison among briers, and thornes, and see how it doth excell them: so doth the true Church excel all assemblies of worshippers in the world. She is base and despised in the eyes of the world, as hauing no ornaments; but in the eyes of the Lord is shee full of spirituall beautie, and decked with heauenly iewels. Contrariwise, those counterfeyte daughters be very gorgious and trimme to the outward eyes, they be very pompous and shining in the flesh: but in the eyes of the Lord they be but as thornes. Behold here the difference. Precious in the eyes of the Lord is his holy Church: but all other assem-

(woe)

blies

blies are but as thornes, meete for the fire. The bride hearing this commendation given of her by her bridegrom, breaketh forth into his praise, which she doth also set foorth by a comparison, saying: *As the apple tree among the trees of the forrest, so is my welbeloued among the sonnes.* As he set foorth her praise, that she excelleth all the daughters, as far as the lillie excelleth the thornes: so she commendeth him, that he in dignitie surmounteth all the sonnes, as farre as the apple tree goeth beyond the common trees of the forest. It may be demaunded, who are those sonnes with whom Christ is compared? Take them whome you will among all creatures in heauen & earth, he farre excelleth them all. *The Angels are great and glorious, but hee is greater,* Heb. 1. *He is far aboue all principalitie and power, and might, and domination, and euery name that is named, not onely in this world, but in that which is to come.* Ephes. 1. Right well therefore doth the Church compare him to excell all others, as farre as the apple tree excelleth the common trees of the forest. And marke now how she proceedeth this allegory, shewing what worthy benefites she receiueth from this goodly apple tree. She includeth them all vnder two, his shadowe, and his fruite. *Vnder his shadowe* (saith she) *I had delight, and sate downe, and his fruite was sweete vnto my mouth.* The shadowe of a tree (as all men

know)

know is comfortable, and doth refresh those that are parched with the boiling heat of the sun. The Church is vnder hote persecutions: there be also firy temptations of the Diuell, and burning heat of guiltines for sinne in the consciences of al the elect, vntill they be refreshed by Christ. Wherefore he saith, *Come vnto me all yee that trauel and be heauie laden, and I will refresh you*, Matt. 11. Vnder his shadow shee taketh delight: in him she findeth rest and peace, and therefore she sitteth downe and remaineth vnder his shadow. A matter worthy to be noted, how the faithful hauing found the Lord Iesus, and being comforted and refreshed by him, doe hold themselues close vnder his shadow, they make their abode there, and seeke no further. They finde that in him there is a full sufficiencie to refresh them in persecution, and to quench and coole al the heat of their sinnes. Farre otherwise it is with Idolaters, and such as worship false Gods. When they haue done al that they can, they are not satisfied, they finde no ease, nor no way to take away the sting of conscience. *They multiply their sorrowes*, as the Prophet saith, Psal. 16. They doe punish and afflict themselues many wayes, seeking all meanes to make some satisfaction for their sin, to coole the burning heat of their guiltie conscience: but when they haue wearied themselues, they can finde no ease nor no rest, for that is only to

ly to be found vnder the shadowe of this apple tree, where the holy Spouse taketh her delight and is set downe. Shall wee not then sit downe onely vnder the shadow of Christ? And then she saith, *the his fruite is sweete vnto her mouth.* She doth not from this fruitfull tree receiue onely the comfortable refreshing shadow, but also eateth of the apples which he beareth: and the same (as she affirmeth) are sweet and pleasant to her taste. What these apples are, I need not stand to shew: the faithful soule feedeth vpon Christ, and is nourished with all heauenly food, euen the fruites which he beareth. And what is wanting in him? *He is made vnto vs of God* (as S. Paul saith) *wisedome, righteousnesse, sanctification and redemption.* 1. Cor. 1. The holy Church is by him alone fully satisfied with all good things, which she doth here declare not onely by this Allegorie of an apple tree, but also by a banquet: for she addeth: *The King brought me into the banqueting house, and loue was his banner ouer me.* It is in our English translation, The King brought me into the wine celler. The word in the Hebrew text is, The house of wine. To take this house of wine for a wine celler, is not fitte: for it is not the order, nor comely that a King should lead his spouse into a wine celler: nay, the house of wine is that which we call a banquetting house. The great Kings and noble Princes of this world doe vse to

to entertaine one another in sumptuous and royall banqueting houses, in which they doe set before them all the daintie things which can bee gotten for monie. This most high and glorious King of al Kings, bringeth his Loue, his Queene, his deare Spouse, into his banqueting house, which doth excell all the banqueting houses of earthly Kings. The costly things which they doe banquet withall, are but trash and drosse, and beggarly scraps, in comparison of those heauenly dainties, with which hee doth entertaine his Spouse. Here is therefore a most rich and precious banquet mentioned. Here is that which is written: *The Kingdome of heauen is like to a King that married his sonne*, Mathew. 22. *Happie and blessed are all they, which are called to this supper*, Reuel. 19. verse 9. But it may be said, how commeth shee into this house of Wine? And how doth shee taste of these heauenly dainties? You must marke how shee saith, that the King brought her into the house of VVine. None can enter in thether, except the Lord Iesus by his spirit doe lead them in. *No man* (saith he) *commeth vnto me except the father that sent me do draw him*, Iohn 6. Wee cannot bee partakers of the heauenly treasures which are in Christ, but through the operation of the holy Ghost; as Saint *Paul* teacheth at large, 1. Cor. 2. And the Church doth taste of this banquet, spiritually

through faith. She doth so feed vpon Christ crucified, eating his flesh, and drinking his bloud. What good thing then doth she want? Is not all fulnes in Christ? we need not doubt, but that here is righteousnesse, here is life, here is peace, here is joy, euen vnspeakeable and glorious, as the holy Apostle S. *Peter* speaketh, 1. Pet. 1. vers. 8. And it is a most speciall matter which she addeth, saying, *And loue was his banner ouer me.* It is the vse and maner in the warres, that an Ensigne or banner is spread and displayed, and so the bands and companies of souldiers are assembled and gathered together, each company vnto their own colours. The Church vpō earth is a Church militant, and hath a great Captaine, a mighty Emperour, vnder whose conduct she doth warre and fight the good fight of faith. His banner is displayed, euen to assemble and gather together vnto him all his bands and companies. And this banner (as shee saith) which is thus spread ouer her, is loue. All the faithfull, euen all the chosen of God are drawn vnto Christ by his loue. What loue is like vnto his, *who hath giuen himself vnto death for vs when we were his enemies? Rom. 5. Who hath washed vs in his bloud, Reuel. 1.* And what is the true and liuely faith, which bringeth men vnto God, but euen to apprehend his fauour, and to know that he hath loued vs, and giuen his own Son, euen by his precious death and

blood-shedding to worke our redemption? All men will confesse that this was a singular loue in Christ: but yee euery man is not drawne thereby to loue againe with the true loue, of which hee himselfe doth speake in the Gospel, saying, *If any man loue me, hee will keepe my word.* Iohn 14.23. And in the same Chapter he saith, *He that hath my commandements and keepeth them, is he that loueth mee*: but onely they which feele that the same loue of Christ reacheth vnto themselues. For the loue of Christ is the Ensigne spread, by which hee draweth all his chosen vnto him: and no one is drawne, but they onely ouer whom the same Ensigne is displayed. For marke this how she saith, *Loue was his banner ouer me.* The loue of Christ is preached, and so the banner is after a sort displayed ouer all that doe heare what hee hath done for mankind: notwithstanding, no man is drawne, saue such as are assured that he hath loued them: for loue is his banner ouer them. They haue the full assurance of faith, that hee suffered death to make satisfaction for their sinnes, that in him they are iustified and sanctified, and shall be glorified. *The Spirit doth witnesse together with their spirit, that they be the sons of God.* Rom. 8. They doe indeed loue him againe; these are enflamed with a most vehement desire to come vnto him, and they ioy and delight in him continually. Yea I may say rightly, that there are

not any which doe worship and serue the Lord with any acceptable seruice or worship, but only those ouer whome the banner of his loue is spread. For vndoubtedly, that which proceedeth not of loue, is but as a duty which is forced, it commeth not in his right kind, it is wrought for some vnfitter respects, or wrung forth by a seruile feare. *Without faith* (saith the holy Ghost, Heb. 11.) *it is impossible to please God.* What is the reason of that? The reason is manifest, that vntill a man by faith doe find and know that the Lord loueth him, he cannot loue God. *We loue him* (saith S. Iohn) *because he loued vs first*, 1 Iohn 4. And not louing God, hee cannot offer any thing vnto him which is acceptable and pleasing in his sight. The Lord God is delighted only with that which proceedeth from a frank heart which sincerely loueth him. And (as S. Paul saith, *Galat. 4.*) *faith worketh by charitie.* Behold then, the fountaine of all holy duties in man towards his Lord God, euen loue, and the same wrought by the banner of his loue spread ouer vs, as the holy Spouse here speaketh, vntill we doe behold this banner indeed displayed ouer vs, we lie vtterly as dead blocks, touching any holy action. A man may force his hands, his feet, his tongue, yea and his minde also vnto the doing of such things as are required, but all is nothing, vntill the loue of Christ constraine vs. When that banner is spread

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ouer vs, then are we drawn, then we run. *Simon Iouna, louest thou me? feed my sheepe. Louest thou me? feed my lambes. Ioh. 1. 21.* And looke what *Paul* did, he saith, *the loue of Christ constraineth vs. 2. Cor. 5. 14.* And wee reade of the woman in the Gospell, which washed the feet of the Lord with teares and wiped them with the haires of her head. From whence proceedeth all this? Was it not frō hence, as Christ saith, that she loued much? And why did she loue much? He also sheweth, when he saith: *for many things are forgiuen her.* She had felt the banner of his loue spread ouer her, in forgiuing her many sins, and this did draw her to loue him exceedingly. Then may we learne from this speech of the Church, what is the chief dutie of the Ministers of the Gospell, namely to spread this banner of his loue vnto the people: yea euen to publish and lay open the riches of his loue towards mankinde, in offering himselfe to bee a ransome for the sinnes of the world, to draw men out of eternal misery, vnto a most happy and blessed life. And then if you will loue the Lord Iesus indeed, seeke to apprehend his loue. Euery man that taketh a wife and a right course must come vnto this with the holy Spouse; *Loue was his banner ouer me.* For if Christ by faith doe leade him into the banqueting house, euen to make him taste of all those heauenly dainties which be in himself, so that he feele that through his

cie of her loue to wards her spouse, is sicke, and soundeth. A [illegible] or [illegible] vehement, or passionate loue there cannot be. By this therefore the spirituall and holy loue of the Church is figured: for the faithfull soule tasting the sweetnes of those apples, and of that heauenly wine, hath such a desire of Christ, as cannot with any words bee expressed. She saith, she is sicke of [illegible], [illegible] it were swounding: And marke this well as a speciall point, where she seeketh helpe, and how she is supported. The sweetnes of those apples which she tasted, & of the precious wine, brought her in to this passion, yet her appetite & desire of them is not thereby diminished, but she desireth them so much the more. She calleth for [illegible] of that wine to comfort, and refresh her spirits, and to haue those same apples strowed vnd [illegible] that shee may be refreshed with their sweet [illegible]. The faithfull whome Christ leadeth into the house of wine, euen vnto the banquet of heauenly things, doe not receiue the same in full measure, but as it were a taste is giuen them by small drops: which S. Paul calleth *the first fruits of the spirit*, Rom. 8. verse 23. And, *the earnest of the spirit*, Ephes. 1. Now by these droppes they doe perceiue what a wonderfull sweetnes there is in those heauenly things, and hereupon they be euen as it were sick with loue, and madie to swound with the desire of hauing more, for you see that she crieth out

for more? It is the will of God, that his redeemed shal not while they liue here, be filled with those precious things which bee in Christ, *in whome there is all fulnes, and of whose fulnes we all receiue.* Iohn 1.16. But a measure is distilled into their soules as it were by little creuises, and so they doe still hunger and thirst after them exceedingly. But vnto whom doth she crie out for the flagons, and for those sweete apples? Shee seemeth not to direct her wordes vnto Christ: for shee speaketh in the plurall number, and not vnto some one. Verily, shee calleth vnto those into whose hands Christ hath committed these treasures to deliuer vnto her. And who bee they? Euen his faithfull seruants: the Prophets and Apostles and all holy teachers. For by the ministery of these, the Lord hath deliuered vnto his Church all those heauenly dainties. They haue alwaies fed her: and therefore she doth rightly direct her speech vnto them, not as vnto the authors, but as vnto the ministers of those things: for she knoweth that they bee wholy and altogether from her welbeloued. *They bee but as stewards and disposers of the misteries of God.* 1. Cor. 4. 1. I neede not stand to make proofe of this, which all that haue any sparke of true knowledge doe confesse. But let vs obserue here some things for our instruction. As first, what is cause that so few are sicke & ready to swound with the loue of Christ?

Or

Of this so few in comparison of the multitude, doe call for the flagons of the heauenly wine, and for the sweete apples? We see that almost all doe seeke after gold and siluer, bending their whole study and care night and day how they may get them. The cause is manifest, men by nature can tell what these things are worth, and doe feele commodities arising by them which are sweete to the flesh. They neuer tasted of those rich dainties which be in Christ, and therefore they be not moued with any desire of them. For who can long for those things which he neuer felt any sweetnes of? May the madnes of the world goeth yet further: for they mocke and scorn at the bride, when she thus calleth for these heauenly things. For if they see any that is earnestly affected to call vpon the Apostles and Prophets in their writings, and to the faithfull teachers that publish the same, to haue their wholesome wine and daintie apples ministred vnto them, though they doe it not so earnestly as they themselues seeke gold: yet they deeme them to bee out of their wits, to be foolish and mad. Doubtles they bee more then mad which prefere earthly and transitorie things, euen very drosse, before the rich treasures which are in Christ. Then further, you shall haue manie that will confesse, that indeed all good things are in Christ, and that such onely are happie as be partakers of the same, and

a desire they seeme to haue to inioy the same, but they disdaine that which the holy Church doth here, they will by no meanes seeke them at their hands whom the Lord hath made the dispensers. They despise the doctrine of the Prophets and Apostles, they care not for hearing the same published. They know not that the true Church euen all the faithfull doe call vnto the ministers of the liuely word *Stay we vp with flagons, and comfort me with apples*. No, they will receiue all as it were immediately from Christ himselfe. These are blind and bewitched by Sathan: for they do not know Gods ordinance, and how Christ doth feede his Church with heauenly things, by the hands of his ministers. Indeed they bee but instruments. Paul *planteth*, *Apollo watereth, but God giueth the increase*, 1. Cor. 3. 6. It is the Lord himselfe that supporteth his Church by his diuine power, and therefore you may see what the spouse teacheth that matter in the next verse, saying, *His left hand is vnder my head, and with his right hand he doth embrace me*. Shee doth so call (as wee haue seene) for the things at the hands of the ministers: but she feeleth and confesseth that all the efficacie is from the Lord himselfe, shewing that he doth stay her vp with both hands. *His left hand* (saith she) *is vnder my head, and with his right hand he doth embrace me*. Then marke how wee are to take heed of two extremities. It is

Gods

Gods ordinance to deliuer all the heauenly treasures vnto vs, by the handes of the ministers: hee worketh by them as by instruments, holding them as starres in his right hand. Reuel. 1. Wee must take heede that we disdaine not to receiue them that way. And then we must also beware that we depend not vpon the men, but with the Church here looke vp higher euen vnto the Lord himselfe, who worketh all in all. For by the ministerie of men we are to be led as it were by the hand vnto Christ, in him we are to stay, he onely must vphold vs. Behold here the kindnes of our Lord Iesus Christ vnto those that truely do seeke him. Their frailtie is great, but he doth vphold them, and comfort them with both handes. Here is the rest, here is the ioy, here is the reuiuing of euery afflicted soule, to be receiued thus into the armes of Christ. And what saith he? *Come vnto me, all ye that trauell and be heauy laden, and I will refresh you.* Matth. 11. 28. Here is a sweet Sauiour to come vnto. These things are plaine and easie, but that which followeth in the next verse is somewhat hard to be expounded. The words are these *I charge you, O ye daughters of Ierusalem, by the Roes, and by the Hindes of the field, that ye stirre not vp, nor wake my loue vntill he please.* Indeede they are thus to bee translated. *I adiure you, O daughters of Ierusalem, or I lay an oath vpon you, or cause you to sweare by the Roes, or by the*

Hyndes

Hindes of the field, if you stirre vp or if you awake &c. For hee vseth the word of making others to take an oath. Here will arise some difficultie aboue this manner of oath, by the roes or hindes: but the greatest difficultie is to finde whether it bee Christ that giueth this straight charge or the Church. By our English translation, you may say there is no doubt, but that Christ giueth this charge, because it is, *that you wake not my loue vntill shee please.* For if it were the Church she would say, *that you wake not my loue vntill hee please.* Yea, but it is not so easily discussed by the Hebrew text: for the word *loue, ahabhah*, is feminine: and if the Church call Christ her loue, the construction is with a verbe of the feminine gender. Some doe expound it that the Lord Iesus doth charge the false sisters of the Church, the degenerate assemblies of Idolaters, that they doe not molest nor trouble this happie peace and rest of the Church, which she hath in him: for the diuel hath plentie of such to work her disquietnes withall. Some others do make some reasons to proue that it is not Christ, but the church which giueth this straight charge, not vnto her false sisters, but vnto her companions that they doe not by any rude behauiour cause Christ to depart a way, or to withdraw himselfe. Indeede the Church is to warne all her weake daughters to carrie themselues reuerently and

purely

purely in the presence of Christ, that they do nos any thing that may displease him. The reasons alledged are not so strong, as to proue it of necessity to be the speech of the Church, and therefore I will not rehearse them. Which of them speake it, the matter is of great waight, as appeareth by the charge, that is giuen by oath. But now touching this oath: are wee not to sweare onely by the Lord God? Is it not hee alone that searcheth the hearts, and the raines, and can tel where there is integrity? Is not hee alone the patron of the iust and innocent, and the taker of vengeance vpon such as abuse his name? How then is here an oath giuen by creatures? Some doe expound the words with an eclipse, thus. *Abide ye abroad vnto the roes, or vnto the hinds of the field.* Others do take it not as an oath, but as an obtestation, as if these things, namely, the roes and hindes onely are called witnes, as you know that it is an vsuall thing in the Prophets, to call vpon creatures to beare witnesse. As *Moses* calleth heauen and earth to record. Verily it doth not seeme here to bee a simple obtestation: yet doth it not warraut men to take an oath by creatures, in as much as all thinges in this Song be mysticall. If it be an oath giuen by Christ for the quiet of his Church, Iewes take heede least wee incurre the danger of it, by being found among her disturbers. If it be the Church that chargeth vs to be-

ware

ware of light and wanton, or rude behaviour in the presence of so holy and so glorious a King let vs feare and tremble, let vs studie continually to bee holy and pure, meete to bee admitted into the banqueting house, and to bee in the presence of a King and Queene so glorious. Thus much for this time. Let vs pray.

THE THIRD SERMON.

CAAP. II.

8. *It is the voice of my welbeloued, behold he commeth leaping ouer the mountaines, and skipperh ouer the hilles.*

9. *My welbeloued is like a Roe, or a young Hinde: behold hee standeth behind our wall looking through the windowes, shewing himselfe through the grates.*

10. *My welbeloued spake and said vnto mee. arise my loue, my faire one, and come away.*

11. *For behold the winter is past, the raine is changed, and gone away.*

12. *The flowers appeare in the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.*

13. *The figge tree hath brought forth her young figges:*

figges: and the vines with their small grapes haue cast a smell. Arise vp, my faire one, and come away.

14 *My doue, that art in the holes of the rocke, in the secret places of the stayres, shew mee thy face: make me to heare thy voice, for thy voice is sweet, and thy face is comely.*

15 *Take vs the foxes, the little foxes, which destroy the vines, for our vines haue small grapes.*

16 *My welbeloued is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lillies.*

17 *Vntill the day breake, and the shadowes flie away: returne, my welbeloued, and be like a Roe, or a young Hart vpon the mountaines of Bether.*

IN the former part of this Chapter we haue seene how Christ Iesus calling himselfe a rose and a lillie, giueth vs to vnderstand, that in him is the fountaine, the fulnes and perfection of all sweet and goodly things. Also that from his sweetnes and beautie, his Church is made so sweete and faire, that shee excelleth all other daughters, as far as the pure white lillie doth the thornes. Then she setteth forth the praise of her welbeloued, by a comparison also mutuall, that as the appletree excelleth the trees of the wood, so doth he excel

the

the former. And further by the shadow of this tree, and the fruit, and by being led into the house of wine, she declareth that in him shee is made partaker of all heauenly blessings, and feeling his loue, she is euen sicke with loue towards him, calling for the further partaking of those graces, and is imbraced, comforted and supported by Christ. Last, a straight charge is giuen, that this may not be interrupted. Now in the rest of this Chapter vnder another similitude, namely of the flourishing spring, shee setteth forth, how hee calleth her forth to the viewing and partaking of those heauenly things. I will first lay open vnto you (as I may say) the letter of the Allegory: for thereby we shall the more easily come to the sense. Consider of two louers here in the world betrothed, the one to the other. The woman remaining in the house in the winter, the man often abroad in the fields, & when the spring time is come, he calleth & inuiteth his spouse to come forth to walke, and to take the delight and comfort of those pleasant things, which the spring doth afforde. Euen so the Church, the beloued Spouse of Christ, being of her selfe here in this world, as it were shut vp in the house vnder the barrennes of winter, is by her welbeloued called vpon to come forth as it were to walke, to view, and to take the solace and comfort of that heauenly spring. This is the summe of all that shee

doth

doth here report. And now let vs come to the particulars. *It is the voice* (saith shee) *of my welbeloued, behalde hee commeth leaping ouer the mountaines and skipping ouer the hilles. My welbeloued is like a Roe or a young Hynde.* In these words you see, that she sheweth how she perceiued his comming, and the manner of his comming. She perceiueth his comming by his voice, she heareth his voice, she knoweth his voice. *It is the voice* (saith shee) *of my welbeloued: behold he commeth.* The Lord Iesus doth call his chosen by his holy word, that is his voice. *And they know his voice*, as hee saith, Iohn 10. *My sheepe heare my voice.* By faith they discerne his voice, euen the heauenly and pure doctrine: the men of this world euen the infidels cannot beare him. There be many opiniõs say they, how can we tell which is the truth? And marke how by his voice, that is by his liuely word, shee perceiueth that Christ commeth vnto her. It is a spirituall and an inuisible comming, and shee hath a spirituall eare to heare, and eyes of the spirit to behold him. *Let him that hath an eare* (saith the holy Ghost,) *heare what the spirit saith to the Churches.* Reuel. 2. and 3. This voice of Christ soundeth in the world, but none heare it, none ioy in it but the holy Church with her children. You may reade in Prouerbs, Chap. 1. How *Salomon* there saith, *that the highest wisedome* (that is Christ) *vttereth*

her voice alounde in the ſtreets, in the open places, and aſſemblies, but is not regarded. Onely (I ſay) the Church heareth, and is ſo ioyfull at it, that ſhe ſaith, *behold hee commeth*,. Then touching the manner of his comming, ſhee ſetteth it forth not onely to be ſwift and ſpeedy, comparing him *to a Roe or young Hinde*, but alſo that no difficulties in the way can hinder or let him: for he leapeth ouer mountaines and hilles. A moſt worthie thing to bee noted, that nothing can keepe backe or ſeparate Chriſt from his Church: his loue is ſo great towards her. There be euen as it were high hilles and mountaines of ſinnes in the people of God, which might ſeparate, and the Diuell raiſeth vp banks to make the way vnpleaſant: but hee paſſeth ouer all theſe high mountaines: ſo aboundant is his kindneſſe and loue. Saint *Paul* handleth this point, Rom.8.38.39. *Neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, ſhall bee able to ſeparate vs from the loue of God, which is in Chriſt Ieſus our Lord.* Of this the Spouſe glorieth, ſaying, *Behold hee commeth leaping ouer the mountaines, and skipping ouer the hilles.* To conclude this point, wee ſee that the faithfull doe by the voice of Chriſt perceiue him comming vnto them, and that hee commeth ſwiftly ouer all lets.

Now

Now to the next point, wherein is set forth how they see him present. *Behold* (saith shee) *he standeth behind our wall, looking through the windowes shewing himself through the gates.* This doth expresse that Christ doth not in full manner exhibite and shew himself present vnto his church in this world. He standeth as it were behind the wall, and looketh in at the windowes, shewing himselfe through latesses. This is cleare and manifest, for Abraham saw him: the Prophets and Moses saw him: yea all the godly vnder the law saw him: but yet vnder tipes and shadowes, as it were looking in through the windowes. And since hee was manifested in the flesh, and hath shewed himselfe more fully, we see him present but by faith. *Behold* (saith he) *I am with you vnto the end of the world.* But yet the Church seeth him present, but by the eies of faith. Also as Saint *Paul* saith. *We know but in part*, 1 Cor. 13. We see him not fully, but as it were through the windowes. Then marke yet further how she proceedeth in setting forth, how hee calleth her: *My welbeloued spake and said vnto mee, arise my loue, my faire one, and come away.* What meaneth this? Verily the regenerate, euen the holy ones of God, are regenerate but in part while they liue here. There remaineth still in them a lumpe of corruption, and so far as that extendeth, they be earthly minded, and euen willingly sit downe in

this world hauing their affections somewhat entangled with the cares and pleasures of the flesh: wherefore, this is the continuall voice of Christ sounding in their eares, Arise, O ye, whom I loue, which are faire in my sight, and come away. Arise, arise from the loue and delight in earthly things, and set your affection vpon the thinges which are aboue. I needé not to stand in the amplification of this point; the holy Scripture in all places, both in the Prophets and Apostles, is full of these voices which call vpon vs to arise vp in our heartes and mindes from these transitorie things which be vpon the earth, vnto heauen and heauenly things. Happie are we if we doe heare this voice of Christ calling vs so louingly, so that we obey it. O how dull, how heauie, how lumpish and prone to the earth we are, which are so little moued with this continuall call of our most louing Sauiour! Wee are ready to mind earthly things, and euen to sit downe in them, and yet our conuersation is in heauen, Phil. 3. There is the holy Citie where our freedome is, after that we should long. We are here but pilgrims and strangers for a time: why doe we then sit downe? why do we not as we are here willed, arise and come away? The worldlings are not moued with this, for they can feele no taste nor sweetnes in any thing but the world, and it is death to them to heare this voice, *arise and come away*. Can they

willingly part from their treasure, yea, I may say, euen from their God, vpon which they haue set their heart, that is to say, their gold, their siluer, their houses and their lands? Let it not be so with vs: but let vs arise with our holy mother, at the voice of Christ: let vs in heart and mind ascend vp into the heauens, *vsing the things of this world as though we vsed them not*, according to the doctrine of the holy Apostle, 1. Cor. 7. Moreouer, let vs marke here, how our Lord Iesus Christ lifteth vp his Church from this earth vnto the heauens, euen by his mightie voice. All the faithfull in themselues, are euen like vnto heauie stones, which doe flie so farre vpward as they are driuen by a force, and when that force ceaseth they come downe againe apace to the earth. For look how farre the Lord with his voice, and loue lifteth vs vp, so farre we ascend, and if that worke not any longer, we come downe with speed.

In the next place we haue the Allegory, vnder which the Lord doth perswade the Church to arise, and come away from the loue of these earthly things, vnto the meditation and desire of the heauenly and spirituall life. It is taken from the times of the yeare. In winter all things lie as it were barren, vnder frost and snowe, and colde blasts. There is no pleasure to be taken then. But in the spring time all sweet things spring, and bud forth, and there is the melodie of birds sing-

ing. Then is there comfort & solace to be taken in walking abroad? Therefore he saith: *For behold the winter is past, the raine is changed and gone away.* And then hee addeth a description of the spring, by the flowers that appeare, by the singing of birds, by the voice of the turtle, by the figtree bringing forth figs, and the vines with their first grapes casting forth a smell. The perswasion then being drawne from the comparison of the times, wee are to consider how it standeth in the mysticall sense. And that is, what the state of all the elect was before their calling, and then what it is after they be called of the Lord, and regenerate. Before they be called, their hearts be euen like the earth in winter, vnder the cold frost and stormes of sinne: for there can no sweet thing grow vp, there is an vtter barrennes. After that the Lord hath called them, and that they bee regenerate, there is an heauenly warmth of his spirit, and the sweete dew of his graces, and then the sweet flowers appeare, then the wholesome fruits doe bud forth: then is there peace and ioy in the holy Ghost, euen heauenly melodie, which is represented here by the singing of the birds. Then the perswasion standeth thus vnto euery one of the faithfull, which are yet somewhat entangled with earthly things, and with the loue of this present world, so that their affections are not so lifted vp, and set vpon the desire of the heauen-

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ly thinges as they ought to bee: *Arise O my my faire one and come away*: for you ought not to set your hearts now vpon thinges that are vain and transitorie, as you did in the dayes of your ignorance, when you lay frosen in your sinnes. For hauing now been made partakers of the heauenly graces, you must take your solace and delight in heauenly things. It is a very strange thing to consider the slacknes that is in the holy Saints of God to arise vp from this vaine world, vnto the meditation and ioy of the world to come. When we haue felt the work of God in vs, vnto our great ioy and comfort, when the sweet flowers and holesome fruits haue budded forth in vs: yet a drousinesse doth come vpon vs, and wee could euen willingly seate our selues here below together with those men, which haue their portion in this life. It is no marualle, that men so long as they haue not tasted of heauenly things, doe gredily lay hold of this world, and cleaue vnto it: they know no better, but as I said, is it not very strange and marualous, that such as haue beene euen rauished in their minds with the sweetnes of Christ, should euen wax cold againe? This it sheweth out, and therefore shee reporteth how he called againe: *Arise my loue, my faire one, and come away*. He calleth againe & againe, *Arise my loue, my faire one, and come away*. So hard a thing it is to draw our mindes

from this earthly trash. But most specially you may note in this place the wonderfull kindnesse of Christ Iesus our Lord, who notwithstanding the dulnes of his chosen, yet esteemeth them so highly as appeareth by his speeches, *Arise my loue, my faire one, &c.* We see plainely by this that the great imperfections which remaine in the regenerate, doe not diminish the loue of Christ towards them, for they do still his loue, nor make them deformed nor loathsome in his eyes, for he saith, *my faire one.* From hence wee may draw two very good and necessarie instructions. The one is for our comfort against the temptations of the Diuell, who taketh occasion by the frailties and imperfections, which are in vs, to beare vs in hand that wee be vtterly deformed in the eyes of Christ, and that hee doth not loue, but hate vs. Beloued, if a man haue touching true faith and repentance, a sincerite and an vnfained vprightnes of heart, let him be assured, that albeit he be clogged with much corruption of the flesh, the burthen whereof doth make him to sigh and grone, seeming deformed in his owne eies, yet is hee beautifull and deare vnto Christ. Then the other instruction is, that we are to imitate this kindnes of our Lord and Master. Many when they behold some things amisse in those that professe the Gospell of Christ, neuer looke vpon their vertues, although they shine but a-

horre and despise them. Let vs take heed of this, and let vs entirely loue and esteeme them faire and precious, which feare the Lord and studie to obey him, although wee see in them otherwise many great imperfections. This example of Christ leadeth vs hereunto, who calleth her his loue, and his faire one, which yet is so addicted in part vnto this vaine world, and so dull to the meditation and delight in heauenly things, that he calleth vnto her againe and againe: *Arise and come away, arise and come away.* Yea, wee may perceiue this slacknes and as it were halting dulnes, that is in the Saints, in that he calleth vpon her, and vseth yet a further perswasion vnto her, in the next verse, to come forth vnto him. The words are these: *My dooue which art in the clifts of the rocke, in the secret of the staire, shew me thy face, make me to heare thy voice, for thy voice is sweet, and thy face is comely.* The latter part of this sentence is cleare and eathe to be vnderstood that he calleth vnto her to come into his company, and to talke with him: adding this encouragement that she is beautiful and well fauoured of face, and her speech is vnto him sweete and pleasant. But how we are to take the former part, which is this: *My dooue which art in the clifts of the rocke, in the hollow place of the staire:* Here is a mistical speech, which we are to enquire the meaning of. First according to the letter,

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ter, wee know that a doue doth seeke for some hole or hollow place in a rocke, or other high thinge, into which shee doth enter to be secret, & safe from the deuouring birdes that would eate her vp, as also from the fowler. Euen so this doue this simple, meeke, harmeles, and chaft spouse of the Lord Iesus, hath her dwelling in the hollow place of an high rocke, the cliftes whereof are as staires, but so as in a rocke, they be such as men cannot clime vp. But what is this rocke then in which this doue resteth? No man can deny but that this rocke is the most high God. You know that the holy Prophet Dauid calleth him, *the rock of his saluation.* This is a rocke which none can clime vnto, in the clift of this rocke, the doue dwelleth safe. Sathan is euen like vnto a greedy kite, which alwayes lieth in waite for to deuoure her, but she remaineth close in this rocke, where he cannot come at her. What is then to be vnderstood by the clift or hollow place of this rocke? Surely, it is Gods eternall counsell and election of his Church vnto life and glorie: for it is in that holy counsell of the Lord, euen as in the hollow place of a most high rocke, that this doue dwelleth safe. Saint Paul saith, *The foundation of God standeth sure, and hath this seale, God knoweth who are his.* 2. Tim. 2. verse. 19. And our Sauiour sheweth, *that it is not possible that the elect should perish.* Mat. 24. It is a madnes for any man to

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thinke that almightie God can erre, or that hee can change his purpose, yea, or that any can withstand the same. Therefore in his eternall counsell and election, as in a most sure rocke, the salvation of the Church resteth. The Prince of darknes hath endeavoured with all his forces to assaile the same, but all in vaine, Reuel. 12. Thus we see briefly what is meant by this that hee calleth *her his dove which is in the clifts of the rocke*. Where we note what a weake state the Church were in, if she had not her abode in this rocke. For if she were out of it, looke how the poore harmelesse doue is a pray vnto the deuouring hawk: so should shee be vnto her enemies: her strength is in this high rocke, her safety in the place in which shee remaineth, in her selfe shee is but as a silly doue, from this rocke (as I said) none can plucke her down. For mark what Christ hath touching that matter. *My sheep heare my voice and I know them, & they follow me, & I giue vnto them eternall life, & they shall neuer perish for euer, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My father that gaue them me is greater than all, neither can any pluck them out of the hand of my father. I and my father are one*, Iohn 10. verse 27. 28. 29. 30. There is then no destroying of this doue, though the bee in her selfe but as a doue, the hawk, the kite, or the fowler cannot reach vnto her? Blessed bee the Lord God, who hath thus prouided for the safetie of

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his poore seruants; and blessed bee the power of his Maiestie, world without end.

Now let vs obserue further, wherefore the bridegroome doth make mention of this, that his doue is in the clifts of the rocke. Surely he doth herein note the very well-head and fountaine of all heauenly blessings, according as S. Paul openeth the matter, saying, *Blessed bee God euen the Father of our Lord Iesus Christ, who hath blessed vs with all spirituall blessing in heauenly things in Christ, as hee had chosen vs in him before the foundation of the world was laid, that we should bee holy and without blame before him through loue.* Ephes. 1. verse 3. 4. Then further he vseth it as an argument to moue his spouse to the contemplation of heauenly things. As if hee should speake thus vnto her, O my doue, thou art from euerlasting in the secret counsell of the most high God chosen in me, and ordained vnto eternall glorie in the heauens, thou art prepared for things farre more excellent then these that bee transitory, set not thine heart therefore vpon them, but lift vp thy minde and thine affection vnto heauenly things, meditate vpon them and delight therein, come to me into my presence and let me see thy face, and heare thy voice. Iudge in your selues beloued, is it meete that such as bee chosen to be heires of eternall glorie, should set their hart vpō the things of this world? Surely all

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the while that they do so, they do euē hide their faces frō Christ, they do not vtter their voice vnto him. Marke then I pray you, how that whē the faithfull soule doth rise vp in cōtemplation from these earthly things vnto the heauēly, taking her delight and solace in them, shee doth then shew her face vnto Christ, she maketh him thē to hear her voice. And then is her voice sweet vnto him, for shee vttereth vnto him many swéete prayers, prayses and thankes for all his benefits: and her face also is faire and delightsome vnto him. What an encouragement is this to make vs seeke after the Lord Iesus? Doth he cal vpon vs in this manner, and doth he thus esteem the voice and beautie of the faithful soule that commeth vnto him? And shall we be slacke? Shall wee lie drousie and dull in our affections? Let this same speech of Christ bee euen printed in our minds. *My doue that art in the holes of the rocke, in the secret place of the staire, shew mee thy face, make mee to heare thy voice, for thy voice is sweet, and thy face is comely.* Is not this a most sweet voice of our Sauiour which hee vttereth vnto euery one of vs? Ought it not to make vs to run swiftly vnto him? Are not they worthy a thousand times to perish, who set light by the calling of so louing a Sauiour? Arise, stirre vp your selues, be not so earthly minded, but delight in heauenly things, let your mind ascend vp vnto Christ, and talke with him.

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If he were auſtere, or did deſpiſe vs, it might haue ſome colour for negligence, but when he doth thus call vpon vs to come, what excuſe can there be? Let vs not be like to the idolatrous Papiſts, who ſeek vnto other mediators, and interceſſors, as if wee poore wretches might not bee ſo bold as to preſume to come vnto him. You ſee how that he willeth his doue to come to him, he doth not ſend her vnto others, ſaying, *ſhew mee thy face, make mee to heare thy voice.* Shall we then beleeue the Diuel, who in the popiſh Church telleth vs, that we muſt deuoutly worſhip and pray to ſome Saint, that ſo we may procure his or her fauour to entreat Chriſt for vs, becauſe it is ouer great preſumption for vs to come directly vnto him? O beloued, will you giue credite to ſuch, againſt the flat voice of the Lord? Looke alſo what is written. *Seeing therefore Brethren, that by the bloud of Ieſus, we may be bold to enter in to the holy place, by the new and liuing way, which he hath prepared for vs, through the vaile that is his flesh, and ſeeing we haue an high Prieſt which is ouer the houſe of God. Let vs draw neare with a true heart, in aſſurance of faith, ſprinckled in our hearts from an euill conſcience, and waſhed in our bodies with pure water, Heb.10.verſ.19.20.21.22.* Thus are wee willed to goe to the Lord our God himſelfe.

Now it followeth, *Take vs the foxes, the little*

foxes

foxes, which destroy the vines, for our vines haue small grapes: Here is a charge giuen, and a reason rendred. The charge is, that they should catch the foxes, yea euen the little foxes: the reason is, because they destroy the vines, being yet in shooting forth their small grapes. Here arise diuers questions, as first who giueth this charge, take vs the foxes. Secondly, to whom this busines is committed. Thirdly, what manner of foxes these be, and how they destroy the vines. And lastly, how they are to be take. Touching the first, it is Christ who giueth this charge. Hee hath care ouer his vine, he hath authoritie to commaund, and the Church doth here report his speech, and also vnder his authoritie doth command likewise the same thing. Then for the second, it is out of all doubt that this charge is laid vpon all the faithfull pastors & teachers, and godly Princes. Concerning the third, these foxes bee false teachers, heretiks and seducers of the Lords people. These bee called foxes, because of their subtiltie and craft: for all sorts of heretiks, and false teachers, doe wind in themselues craftely, making a shew of truth and holinesse, *They come in sheepes clothing* (as our Sauiour saith, Matth. 7. 15.) *But inwardly they be nothing but rauening Wolues.* It may seeme very strange how such destroying Foxes, yea such grieuous rauening Wolues, as the holy Ghost nameth them, Matth. 7. Acts 20.

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should make such a faire shew of truth and holinesse as that they should seduce and draw men from the right way, into the crooked by-waies of heresies and errors, and so destroy and waste the vines. But Saint *Paul* sheweth a reason, that it is no maruaile, for speaking of the foxes of his time he saith: *Such false Apostles are deceitfull workers transformed into the Apostles of Christ: and no maruaile* (saith hee) *for Sathan himselfe is transformed into an Angell of light: therefore it is no great thing, though his Ministers transforme themselues, as though they were the Ministers of righteousnesse*, 2. Cor. 11. verse 13. 14. 15. These foxes then haue their subtiltie from that great Fox the Diuel. Many and differing sorts of these Foxes were in the time of the law, and many also haue euer beene vnder the Gospel, and shalbe euer vnto the end of the world: among which the great Romish Foxe is the principal. And howsoeuer they be differing in their errors and false opinions, yet herein they meet in one, that they be all subtile Foxes, wasting & destroying the vines of Christ. Here wee may behold the State of Gods Church, that there shall be alwayes Foxes that will creepe in among the vines, and if there be not (as I may say) hunters to hunt and to catch them, wee may easily perceiue what perill the yong grapes be in. We are therefore to pray instantly vnto the Lord, who hath planted this

vine,

that he will alwaies raise vp wise & vigilant keepers, which may indeed catch these willie Foxes: and therein we come to the fourth point, which is, how they must bee taken. Doubtles the faithfull Ministers of the Gospell, are said to catch them when by the word of God they do strongly confute their heresies, and by excommunication cast them forth of the Church. Then seeing heretikes being conuinced, yet continue obstinate, and doe finne euen condemned by their owne iudgement as Paul saith, Titus, 3. verse 11. and so will impudently goe forward to destroy the Church, the godly Magistrates are with ciuil and corporall punishments to catch them. Thus wee see the care which the Lord hath ouer his vine, that the Foxes may bee taken, which are ready to destroy the grapes, euen in their first budding, they would seduce the faithfull: euen while they be yong and weake.

It followeth, *My welbeloued is mine, and I am his, which feedeth among the lilies.* Vpon all those former speeches of Christs, which shee repeated, shee doth breake forth into a glorying, not glorying indeede in her selfe, but in him: according to that which S. Paul alleageth out of the Prophet, *Hee that glorieth, let him glorie in the Lord*, 1. Cor. 1. verse 31. And marke what it is that shee glorieth of, for it is indeede that, in which consisteth her whole felicitie, namely, in

communion, which is betwixt the Lord Iesus Christ and her, and the sweete fruit which shee receiueth thereby. This holy communion is expressed after this manner, *My welbeloued is mine, and I am his.* Here wee must first note that there is an vnion betwixt Christ and his Church, from whence commeth this communion. Hee is her head, and she is by the spirit vnited vnto him, as his mistiall bodie: he being her head, whatsoeuer is in him, it is hers, and therfore it is said, *that he is made vnto vs of God, wisedome, righteousnesse, sanctification, and redemption.* 1. Cor. 1. *It hath pleased the Father, that in him all fulnesse should dwell* Colloss. 1. verse 19. In him is holines, in him is power, in him is life eternall: and all these things doe flow from him, the head vpon her, for she saith, *My welbeloued is mine.* Behold then what an incomparable treasure shee doth boast of, when shee saith, *My welbeloued is mine?* For all the riches, the ioyes, and the glory of heauen are hers, for he being hers all is hers: seeing nothing that is good is wanting in him. From hence it is that the Apostle saith: *Hee will make her to himselfe glorious Church.* Ephes. 5. And then on the other side shee saith, *and I am his,* by this expressing that as he hath redeemed her with his owne blood, yea as he hath taken vpon him her sinne, her curse, her death, and hath made her righteous in himselfe, and inherit with him

of eternal glorie, so she doth consecrate herselfe wholy vnto him, she is onely his, shee forsaketh all other. She cõmitteteth not whoredome with idols, she doth not imbrace the Doctrine of Diuels, shee doth not set her heart vpon the vaine delights and pleasures of sinne, but shee delighteth in him, he is her ioy, she is pure and chast & holy vnto him, & offereth vnto him al the sweet and delectable fruits of her faith, and loue towardes him. This is that which the holy Apostle saith, *That he had prepared the Church of Corinth, that hee might present them as a pure virgin vnto one man, euen to Christ, 2. Cor. 11. verse 2.* What shall we say then vnto those, which would haue Christ to be theirs, but they will be none of his? They seeme to boast of a faith in his death, and passion, as if by the same they should obtaine righteousnes and life eternall: but they bee vncleane, they liue not vnto Christ, they be not led with his spirit, and therefore they be not his: for what doctrine they professe, they doe not greatly care, and the world and fleshly pleasures are their ioy: fruits they offer vp none vnto Christ. O happie is that soule, which with a true and liuely faith can say, *My welbeloued is mine, and I am his.* And happie are they which say hee is theirs, and yet they are not his, they liue not vnto him. Then she saith, that *hee feedeth among the lillies*: we know that the lillies are faire, sweet,

soft and pleasant, and therefore the Church saith that her Spouse feedeth his flocke among the lilies: which is to let us know, that he feedeth her with most excellent things. Most true it is, that there is nothing under heaven that can be esteemed any full shadow or resemblance of the heavenly Manna, wherewith Christ feedeth the soules of his: but the Church speaketh that which may in some sort resemble it. And now there remaineth onely the last verse of this Chapter, in which the holy Spouse upon the feeling of those former benefites, concludeth with a vehement prayer vnto Christ, saying, *Vntill the day breake, and the shadowes flie away, returne my welbeloued, and be like a Roe or a young Hart, upon the mountaines of Bether.* The summe of her prayer is, that her Welbeloued from whome she receiveth all her comfort, would come speedily vnto her in all her neede, all the time of her peregrination here upon earth; and not by any meanes bee seperated from her. Indeede the words are mistical, and her first speech is as much as to say vntill the morning, when she saith, *Vntill the day dawne, and the shadowes flie away*, for the night is but the shadow of the earth, so that the Sunne comming vnto our Horizon, with his beames causeth all shadowes to flie away from the face of the earth. The Church upon earth, is as it were in the night, as some take it,

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vnder the shadowes of the law which should & did flie away after that cleare day of Christs resurrection. For when our Lord was manifested in the flesh, it was a cleare day in comparison of the time of the law, when they had all vnder shadowes: but wee may extend this prayer (as I take it) more fully to the second comming of the bridegroome, for then indeed shall bee the perfect cleare day, then shall all shadowes vanish and there shall be no obscurities, but most glorious light. In Psal. 49. where the Prophet speaketh of the wicked, and saith that the righteous shall haue Dominion ouer them in the morning, hee speaketh it of the day of the generall iudgment, which is the beginning and euen as the morning of that euerlasting most glorious light, in which the Saints shall dwell. Shee prayeth then that til that most glorious morning, while she is here in the wildernesse, he will be like a Roe, or a yong Hart, that is, that hee will come swiftly vnto her, for her defence and comfort in all her tribulations. Her enemies are great, and her frailties are many, and shee prayeth that he will passe ouer all lets of her sinnes, or whatsoeuer, which she calleth the mountaines of Bether, that is of separation. We see then that this is a most sweet prayer of the Church, and which euery faithfull soule doth earnestly powre forth vnto him, that he will come speedily & put them in full and sure comfort

them, while they be here in the middest of cruel enemies, of frailties and calamities. O Lord Iesu come speedily and saue vs, Amen.

The Fifth Sermon.

CHAP. III.

1 *In my bed by night, I sought him whom my soule loueth, I sought him, but I found him not.*

2 *I will arise now and goe about in the Citie, by the streets and by the open places, I will seeke him whom my soule loueth; I sought him, but I found him not.*

3 *The watchmen that went about the Citie found me: haue you seene him whom my soule loueth?*

4 *When I had passed a little from them, then I found him whom my soule loueth, I laid hold on him, and left him not, vntill I had brought him vnto my mothers house, into the chamber of her that conceiued me.*

5 *I charge you, O daughters of Ierusalem, by the Roe, and by the Hindes of the field, that yee stirre not vp, nor wake my loue, vntill shee please.*

IN the former Chapter the Bride made report how her loue Iesus Christus most kind maner sought her vp, and called vpon her againe and againe to arise, and to come forth vnto him fro the cares & delights in earthly

things,

things vnto the meditation and ioy in things that be heauely & spirituall. And now in this Chapter she sheweth how she sought after him, he hauing withdrawne himselfe, and missing of him, yet she ceased not, nor gaue ouer seeking in all places vntill shee found him, and brought him home vnto her mothers house. Here is then in some respect a diuerse and a differing estate and condition from the former. For the faithfull doe not continue alwayes alike, but euen now, Christ shewing himselfe vnto them, and calling vpon them, they are euen rapt and enflamed with the loue and ioy of heauenly things. By and by euen as a kettle vpon the fire, which while the flame is vehement doth seeth fast, and as the flame slaketh, so it cooleth: they wax somewhat colder, they fall into some drouisnesse and securitie, they feele not the ioyes and delights which they did: Christ seemeth to bee gone from them. And then being either touched with some affliction, or moued by some meanes, they do seeke to feele the same ioyes that they felt in him before. They would alwayes feele them: for they be ioyes that passe all earthly ioyes, as the Prophet Dauid, Psal. 4. sheweth, that the light of Gods countenance put more gladnes into his heart, then the worldly men had when they reckoned great plentie of corne and wine and oyle, wherewith they make themselues merrie. And how earnestly

the holy ſpouſe doth ſeeke after, her welbeloued her words wil declare, which we wil now come vnto. Firſt, let vs conſider the eternall thinges, which doe repreſent and figure the things which are inuiſible, miſticall, ſpirituall, and heauenly. The Church is compared to a virgin betrothed, who dwelling in her mothers houſe in a Citie, in which there be Watchmen that goe about in the night, and while ſhe is in her bed, her mind runneth vpon her Welbeloued, ſhee cannot endure his abſence, but ariſeth out of her bead, and euen in the night walketh about in the ſtreets of the Citie for to ſeeke him. Who wil not ſay that this were a vehement loue, that ſhould cauſe a damoſell to doe this? Indeede in this earthly loue it ſhould paſſe modeſty: but in the ſpirituall loue, as we ſhall ſee, it is moſt highly to bee commended. Let vs come then to the particulars: *In my bed* (ſaith ſhee) *by nights*. What is the bed of the Church? where doth ſhee lie downe to reſt and take eaſe? It is a drowſie ſecurity which the fleſh bringeth, and in which all the true children of God, according to the fleſh, could be content to neſtle themſelues, and euen to lie quiet, and warme, were it not that they are moued by the operation of another ſpirit then their owne: for euen in this bed ſhee ſeeketh. There is a worke wrought within, that will not let her altogether forget her Bridegroome: yea the godly in that

coldnes which commeth vpon them do remember what ioyes they haue felt in Christ, and often times they doe wish that they did euen continually feele them. But marke then how yet they seeke him vpon their bed, which is not to bee allowed. Most gladly they would taste of his sweetnes, but with all they doe desire to haue ease and pleasures in the flesh: faine would they lie still in their warme bed. This (I say) is the thing which we doe all couet: faine would we feele the ioyes of heauen in Christ, and faine would we also inioy the delightes of the flesh: wee would haue both, but this will not bee: for marke how hee saith, *In my bed by night I sought him, whome my soule loueth: I sought him, but I found him not*, She findeth him not while shee is in her bed, hee will not bee so found. He that will find Christ, must rowse himselfe out of that bed of carnall ease. If a man desire and wish to feele the sweetnesses of Christ, and will also stuffe himselfe with carnall delightes, he shall not taste of him: if he doe taste, it will vanish. Therefore the holy bride here goeth further and saith, *I will arise*. Behold she riseth out of her bed to seeke him, for there she cannot find him, and find him shee will. And when commeth she out of her bed? Euen in the night. Where be any time fit for the bed, it is the night, and then it is most inconuenient, and most it grieueth to come out of the bed: but she commeth

meth out of her bed, euen in the night for to seek her loue. Rather then she wil not find him, shee will forgoe and forsake all ease and pleasures in the world. Is this the true Church? and are these the right Christians? VVhat shall wee say then vnto those which will forsake no delight nor pleasure to seeke Christ? They haue a desire to feele his sweetnesse, but they lie still vpon their bed. O beloued, all you that haue euer tasted, as the holy Apostle Peter speaketh, how sweet the Lord is, 1. Pet. 2. and doe couet to taste him still, remember continually what is here done: seeke him, but come out of your bed. Let not your loue be so cold, as to bee withheld from seeking the Lord by any carnall delights. And behold yet further, how the Spouse doth not onely rise out of her bed to seek her welbeloued, but also goeth forth into the streets, and open places of the Citie, seeking all about for him. Here is a very great loue expressed: here is a marualous zeale. A virgin to rise out of her bed, and in the vnseasonable time of the night to walke about in the lanes and streets of the Citie: what inconueniences and dangers might ensue? Well, shee casteth no perils, her minde is so set vpon her Spouse that she cannot rest, her burning loue towards him thrusteth her forward to seeke him, whatsoeuer come of it. But may shee not seeme to be scarce wel in her wits? Could not shee tarry vntill it were day?

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or might shee not haue patience to expect his comming vnto her? Surely the worldlings doe wonder at those, which with feruent zeale and loue seeke after Christ Iesus: and they oftentimes say plainely that they be more then half mad: for when they behold how the seruants of God debarre themselues from sinfull pleasures, giuing themselues to reading, hearing, and holy meditation in the lawes of God, that so they may obey him, they wonder as at a strange thing that they runne not with them vnto the same excesse of riot, as the holy Apostle saith, and therefore they speake euill, 1. Pet. 4. vers. 4. When they see men so zealous in seeking Christ, as that neither the danger of their liues, nor losse of their goods can stay them, doe they not say, what mad fooles bee these? They will not in any wise buy Christ so deare, they hope to goe to heauen without any such trouble. They see no reason why they shold depriue themselues of any pleasures or delights for to seeke heauenly things. They will not professe the Gospell, so as to bee mocked and pointed at: If any great man doe but frowne at them, they lay the Bible aside. I thinke you may easily see the difference betweene these and the faithfulwho here vnder the person of the Church are said to arise out of their beds in the night, and to seeke about in the streets of the Citie. These be not withheld with ease and pleasures, nor yet

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scarred with perils and inconueniences. These do know that Christ is worth the seeking, although they should loose their liues for seeking of him. Yea, they do approue the doctrine of S. Paul, who saith, *that the light and momẽtany afflictions of this life, are not worthy the glorie that shall be reuealed.* And how well the Lord approueth of this loue and zeale in his spouse, aduenturing herselfe thus to seeke him, you may see by his own words in the Gospell, when hee saith, *That except a man denie himselfe, take vp his crosse, and follow him, hee cannot be his Disciple.* And, *whosoeuer doth not forsake Father and Mother, Wife and goods, yea and his life, he is not worthie of him.* But the Spouse here saith, *I will arise and goe about in the Citie, by the streets and open places, and I will seeke him whom my soule loueth,* then she addeth, *I sought him, but I found him not.* Here may two questions be demanded: the one whether the Church be euer without Christ. The other may bee this: whether the Lord doe not deale lesse kindly with his Spouse, in letting her wander about to seeke him, and doth not by and by shew himselfe vnto her? Touching the first, it is out of all doubt that the Lord Iesus is alwayes present with his Church, but the faithfull haue not alwayes the same liuely feeling of his presence. He seemeth to hide himselfe away, and to be absent: and then doe the godly labour to haue a more

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full and perfect sence of his presence, it is his secret worke in them that they seeke. And now for the other question, that Christ doth suffer his to seeke him through so many difficulties, and doth not at the first shew himselfe, it is not to be imputed vnto any want of kindnes, or for her hurt, but for her benefit, for it is for the trial and exercise of her faith, her loue and patience. Yea it is to stirre vp and to kindle her affection more vehemently for to seeke after him. Finally: it is to teach all the godly to make precious account of retayning Christ with them. For when they are fallen into drowsinesse, and so haue lesse feeling: it is not so easie a matter to find the Lord againe. Continue therefore your prayers and meditations, and all holy exercises, by which the liuely feeling of Christs presence is continued. Well, while shee thus sought him all about, and found him not, the Watchmen that went about in the Citie found her. The Watchmen in a Citie doe passe to and fro, to see if there be any stirring whereby hurt may arise, and these doe finde her now in the streetes. Who may these Watchmen bee? If the Citie be the visible Church (for the faithfull doe dwel scattered in the visible Church among many counterfeit worshippers of God) then these watchmen are the Pastors, who are to watch ouer the City, as the Lord telleth the Prophet *Ezechiel*, that hee had made him a Watchman

scarred with perils and inconueniences. These do know that Christ is worth the seeking, although they should loose their liues for seeking of him. Yea, they do approue the doctrine of S. Paul, who saith, *that the light and momẽtany afflictions of this life, are not worthy the glorie that shall be reuealed.* And how well the Lord approueth of this loue and zeale in his spouse, aduenturing herselfe thus to seeke him, you may see by his own words in the Gospell, when hee saith, *That except a man denie himselfe, take vp his crosse, and follow him, hee cannot be his Disciple.* And, *whosoeuer doth not forsake Father and Mother, Wife and goods, yea and his life, he is not worthie of him.* But the Spouse here saith, *I will arise and goe about in the Citie, by the streets and open places, and I will seeke him whom my soule loueth,* then she addeth, *I sought him, but I found him not.* Here may two questions be demanded: the one whether the Church be euer without Christ. The other may bee this: whether the Lord doe not deale lesse kindly with his Spouse, in letting her wander about to seeke him, and doth not by and by shew himselfe vnto her? Touching the first, it is out of all doubt that the Lord Iesus is alwayes present with his Church, but the faithfull haue not alwayes the same liuely feeling of his presence. He seemeth to hide himselfe away, and to be absent: and then doe the godly labour to haue a more

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full and perfect ſence of his preſence, it is his ſecret worke in them that they ſeeke. And now for the other queſtion, that Chriſt doth ſuffer his to ſeeke him through ſo many difficulties, and doth not at the firſt ſhew himſelfe, it is not to be imputed vnto any want of kindnes, or for her hurt, but for her benefit, for it is for the trial and excerciſe of her faith, her loue and patience. Yea it is to ſtirre vp and to kindle her affection more vehemently for to ſeeke after him. Finally: it is to teach all the godly to make precious account of retayning Chriſt with them. For when they are fallen into drowſineſſe, and ſo haue leſſe feeling: it is not ſo eaſie a matter to find the Lord againe. Continue therefore your prayers and meditations, and all holy exerciſes, by which the liuely feeling of Chriſts preſence is continued. Well, while ſhee thus ſought him all about, and found him not, the Watchmen that went about in the Citie found her. The Watchmen in a Citie doe paſſe to and fro, to ſee if there be any ſtirring whereby hurt may ariſe, and theſe doe finde her now in the ſtreetes. Who may theſe Watchmen bee? If the Citie be the viſible Church (for the faithfull doe dwel ſcattered in the viſible Church among many counterfeit worſhippers of God) then theſe watchmen are the Paſtors, who are to watch ouer the City, as the Lord telleth the Prophet *Ezechiel*, that hee had made him a Watch-

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man. But then if it bee so, why doe not these Watchmen lead her vnto Christ, for that is their office and dutie? Surely, it doth often fall out, that the shepheards themselues, euen the watchmen ouer the house of Israel, do not know Christ aright, but are blinded with worldly pompe and couetousnes. She doth demaund of them, if they haue seen him whom her soule loueth, but there is no mention of her answere. Either they made none, or else such an answere, as could do her no good. Well, she goeth but a little past them and shee findeth her welbeloued. Then we see plainly that she findeth him at the last. This is according to the promise, *Aske and yee shall haue, seek and ye shall find, knocke and it shall bee opened vnto you. For whosoeuer asketh receiueth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall bee opened, Matth. 7. verse* 7. 8. Here is a goodly comfort vnto all those which with hearty affection doe seeke after Iesus Christ: for though they seeme for to loose their labour, yet let them not faint nor waxe wearie, for in the end they shall find him. He is not out of the Citie, albeit the blind Watchmen doe not see him. Hee will shew himselfe most comfortably vnto them that seeke him with an vpright heart, if they giue not ouer. Wel are wee if wee bee wise and strong in this point, for many there bee which beare the name of Christians, which seeke not Christ at all,

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but doe despise and neglect all holy exercises. Others there bee which doe seeke, but they doe not continue seeking, they faint, they wax weary, and so giue ouer: because they feele not the quickning power of Christ euen at the first, or after some short time, they doe euen relent and giue ouer. Let vs learne here of the Spouse, not to giue ouer, let vs passe through all lets, dangers and inconueniences, seeing in the end we shall not misse of him. Wee are often brought into doubt of the truth in some points, because the Sect-masters and Heretikes doe make such a shew of truth for their false opinions. We are also clogged with sinfull lusts, which doe disquiet our minds. Christ alone is to rid vs from all these snares, and though it seeme long oftentimes before wee can get out of them, yet in the end wee finde deliuerance: for all that finde Christ, are freed from danger, and he that continueth to the ende, he shall be saued, Matth. 24. But now let euery one beware that they seeke the Lord in simplicitie and singlenesse of heart: for such as are puffed vp with pride and vain-glorie, when they come vnto any knowledge, fall away againe, and many such there haue euer beene. Of all others, a man would take them to bee the most earnest seekers after Christ, and in the end there is euen the dogge to his vomite. They seemed to eschew the filthie pollutions of the world with an exceeding

ding great loathing and deteſtation, and ſuddainely they doe euen turne backe vnto them, and doe become ringleaders vnto ſundry kindes of lewdneſſe. O wicked pride and vaine-glorie, whither doſt thou caſt men! If they had while they did runne in the way, ſought Chriſt in ſingleneſſe of heart, ſeeking indeed to bee rid of their errours, and to haue all euill luſts ſubdued in them, they ſhould not haue miſſed of him. Behold the cunning of the Diuell, in ſetting them ſo on worke: for now if we call vpon men to be zealous and feruent in ſeeking the Lord, they can obiect, what is become of the vehement ſeeking of ſuch and ſuch men? O beloued, learne of the Church here, to continue ſtill our earneſt ſeeking and learne by the fearefull example of thoſe men how good it is to ſeeke with humilitie, and with all lowlines of mind, not glorying in our ſelues, but in the Lord. Remember that admonition of the Bleſſed Apoſtle, who ſaith, *With feare and trembling worke out your ſaluation: for it is God that worketh in you both the will and the deede, of his good pleaſure*, Phil. 2.12.13. Let vs bee afraid of our owne afflictions which are crooked and peruerſe: let vs not leane vnto our own reaſon which is blinde, for if we doe, then ſhall wee wilfully and ſtiffly ſtand to maintaine our owne opinions: wee ſhall bee readie to ſhew our wit in maintaining errours. Neither let vs delight to

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haue our owne will fulfilled, but ready to deny it, that wee may fulfill the holy will of the Lord. In a word, let vs feare and ſuſpect whatſoeuer is of our ſelues, and ſeeke to bee wholy directed and guided by the ſpirit of the Lord. This is the true and the right ſeeking of Chriſt, and after this manner the holy Spouſe ſeeketh him, and if we continue thus ſeeking, we ſhall with her find him at the laſt.

Now when ſhee had found him, what doth ſhee then? She telleth vs here what ſhe did. For marke her ſpeech: *I* (ſaith ſhee) *laid hold of him, and left him not, vntill I had brought him vnto my Mothers houſe, into the chamber of her that conceiued mee.* Chriſt is a moſt glorious King, is not this then ouer rude dealing, that ſhe ſaith ſhe laid holde one him? May the faithfull vſe this boldnes? Surely, the laying hold on Chriſt is only by faith, which goeth not with any vnreuerend dealing, & the Lord is ſo farre off from diſalowing it, that in doth moſt highly pleaſe him. This is the maruailous kindnes of our Lord, which Satan would beare vs in hand by his miniſters, (I meane the Papiſts) to be nothing ſo. Oſay they, it is ouer much sawcines, for ſinfull men to come directly vnto Chriſt, and to lay hold on him. It becommeth them in more humble manner to ſeeke vnto ſome that be inferiour, Some Saint or Angell, which may ſpeake for them. Yea, but

doth the holy Church here ſo? No, no, ſhee ſeeketh onely after Chriſt, her mind is bent onely vpon him, and vpon him directly ſhee laieth hold with the hand of faith and draweth him vnto her. And hee doth not condemne it in her as a rude part, but it is her praiſe and glorie, ſo to lay hold on Chriſt, and let not vs bee afraid in this pure ſort to lay hold on him, for you can no way ſo highly pleaſe the Lord, as by laying hold on him with a true and liuely faith. When the Church had ſought him vpon her bed, but found him not, when ſhe had alſo ſought him about in the ſtreets of the Citie, but found him not: now when ſhe doth find him, how earneſtly ſhee layeth hold on him! Surely the Lord doth withdraw himſelfe ſometime from the godly, and as it were hide himſelfe, ſo that they doe not feele the comfort and peace in him that they would. Then doe they ſeeke him with care and griefe, then alſo miſſing of him, they ſee what it is to want him, and therefore ſo ſoone as euer hee ſheweth himſelfe, they ſpeedily lay holde on him, as hauing found their onely treaſure and felicitie. O how the faithfull run vnto Chriſt, and with what earneſt deſire they lay holde on him, that they may ſtill be partakers of his ſweet and precious comfortes! Here alſo we may note the force and efficacie of the true and liuely faith: how it doth not onely lay hold on the Lord, but alſo keepeth and

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retaineth him fast, and will not let him goe; for so bee her words: This is a very maruailous thing, that the almightie should be so held and retained euen as it were with a violent force and power. But surely he hath by his couenant and promise bound and tied himselfe vnto vs: so that whosoeuer layeth hold on the Lord, with the hand of faith, it is vnpossible that hee should depart from them. This peraduenture will seeme hard vnto some: for it may be said, she laieth hold on him, and will not let him goe, but if he would, could he not haue brake from her? Because you say it is vnpossible that hee should depart from them, that lay hold on him with the hand of faith. Let men consider, that it is vnpossible that God shold break his couenant and promise, it is vtterly vnpossible that God should lie. Well he hath promised, he hath couenanted and sworne, that all which beleeue in his sonne shall not be confounded. Whereby it is manifest, that Christ cannot depart from the soule which beleueth aright in him: we are not to take these speeches, as if Christ would depart from any that trust in him, but only I doe note her speech, when she saith that she did lay hold on him, and would not let him goe, declaring with what force shee did hold, and retaine him. What are we then more to seeke after then this same mightie hand of faith? *It is the rocke against which the gates of hell cannot pre-*

naile, as we may reade, Matth. 16. *It is the ſhield that quencheth all the fiery darts of the enill one* Epheſ. 6. *It is* (as S. Iohn ſaith) *our victorie by which we ouercome the world.* 1. Iohn 5. Then it ſubdueth the prince of the world, it bringeth vnder al the power of the Diuel. And as *Iaakob* did wreſtle with the Angell, and would not let him goe, and therefore he called him Iſraell, ſaying, thou haſt power with God, thou ſhalt preuaile with men, Gen. 32. So all that belieue, bee true Iſraelites, they lay hold vpon Chriſt by faith, they wreſtle and preuaile with God. Great then is the praiſe and the glorie of faith, which if men did throughly way and conſider, they would not be ſo cold and ſo careleſſe in ſeeking after it. They would not bee ſo negligent in reading and hearing of the holy word of God, with little or no meditation in the ſame. They would not bee ſo faint and feeble in prayer, but inſtantly they would call vpon the Lord to increaſe their faith, whereby they may thus preuaile by laying hold on Chriſt, and retayning him ſtill with them. O what labour ſhould we refuſe in this thing? How doe men labour and toile in the world for to get riches which are tranſitorie? Who is able to expreſſe their induſtrie & care, how they do beate their braines about it day and night? Would to God that we had but halfe ſo much care, & that wee would indeed take but euen halfe ſo much

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paines to seeke after this rich and incomparable iewel of faith, this hand which laieth so fast hold on Christ, that it will not let him goe. Indeed the excellencie of it is in respect of him, whom it holdeth. In Christ there is all fulnes of good things. *Whosoeuer is in him, there is to them no condemnation*, Rom. 8. 1. They be most happy and blessed for euermore: then see what this hand obtaineth. On the other side, such as bee not in Christ, they be in their sinnes, they be void and destitute of all good things, they be vnder cõdemnation. When Christ is laide open, and published vnto them, so that in some sorte they are made to see wherin all happines resteth, where the onely remedie against all miseries is, yet they are neuer the better, they haue no hãd to lay hold of Christ nor to retaine him, but they doe stil languish in their miserles: for that is proper onely to the Church and her children, which is here spoken, I laide hold on him, and left him not vntill I had brought him vnto my mothers house, into the chamber of her that conceiued me. Againe, here is an effectuall laying hold on him, by the Bride, so that shee retayneth him to dwell with her for euer. For that is to be gathered by this, when she bringeth him vnto her mothers house, and into the chambers of her that conceiued her. The faithful soule is not contented, neither doth it satisfie her in some slight manner to lay holde on

Christ for a time, but shee will leade him home euen into the inner chamber, of her minde, that so he may dwell in her, and she in him. Then she liueth, or as the Apostle speaketh, Christ liueth in her, *Galath.2.verse 20.* The holy Ghost calleth vpon men, *to open the gates and the euerlasting doores*: that is the doores of their heart, *and the King of glory shall come in. Psal.24.* Shee doth here open the gates and the doores, and leadeth him in. What good thing can be wanting where the King of glory entreth in for to dwell? He is the Lord of Hoasts who is strong and mightie in battaile. He doth subdue sinne, and putteth the Prince of darknes to flight, yea he chaseth away all euill where hee dwelleth. No maruaile then that she will not let him goe, but leadeth him into the chambers of her that conceiued her. This is a great misterie and a secret: for although men do professe the name of our Lord Iesus Christ in word, yet for the most part they know not what this meaneth. They know not I say, what it is to bring Christ home into the chamber: he is in the heauens, a nearer presence of him they doe neither feele nor make account of. Christ indeede is in their mouth, but the spirit of pride, of enuie, of selfe-loue, of couetoulnes, of lechery, and of all vncleanes, yea euen the spirit and power of the Diuell doth dwell in their heart. Their workes doe declare no lesse, for all their filthie

speeches

ſpeeches and wicked deedes doe manifeſtly ſhew that they bee the children of that wicked one. As you may read how our Sauiour doth reaſon againſt the Iewes, ſaying, *Yee doe the workes of your Father, and you are of your Father the Diuell, Ioh.* 8. And S. *Iohn* ſaith, *Be not deceiued: hee that worketh righteouſnes, is righteous, as he is righteous, he that committeth ſinne is of the Diuel,* 1. *Iohn* 3 *verſe* 7.8. If you will then be the true children of the Church, lay hold on Chriſt, and bring him home into your hearts that there his life and power may appeare. But as it was ſaid, here it may now bee demaunded, what mother hath the Church? Who is ſhe that conceiued her? Is there any Spouſe of Chriſt but one? I anſwere, there is but one Church, one miſticall bodie of Chriſt, and one Spouſe: but alwaies that part of the church, wch is vpō earth, is called the daughter of the church of former times. As we ſee how the generations paſſe away, and euermore there ariſe vp new, which for the time are as a young virgin and daughter to the former. There is a continuall ſucceſſion, and the Church doth euermore bring forth vnto the lord, ſo that euermore the church here in the world may ſay, ſhe leade h Chriſt into the Chambers of her that conceiued her. And here is alſo to be noted, that ſhe leadeth him not vnto a ſtrange habitation, but vnto the ſame where her mother did entertaine him. For

thereis one faith, one hope, one doctrine, and therefore euery Church for the time vpon earth entertaineth Christ as her mother before her did. And in very deede, if you will approue your selues to be right Christians, looke to the steps of the ancient Christians, euen of the mother Churches vnder the Prophets and Apostles, and doe euen as they did.

And now see what followeth: *I charge you, O daughters of Ierusalem by the Roes and by the Hindes of the field, that yee stirre not vp, nor wake my loue, vntil she please.* I noted before, that it is doubtfull whether Christ or the Church did vtter this speech: for the word (*loue*) is feminine, and so may bee taken of Christ. Indeede it seemeth in this place to be the speech of the Bride; for hauing with long seeking found her welbeloued, and brought him home vnto her mothers house, she is much afraide least he should haue any occasion giuen vnto him to depart, or to withdraw himselfe from her, and therefore layeth this straight charge vpon her daughters, euen binding them with an oath, to beware least they awake and stirre him vp, before he please: For as I noted before in the other chapter, where we had this charge euen word for word, the daughters of Ierusalem are to take heed, least by their rude and vnreuerend behauiour, they cause the Lord for to depart, seeing that when he doth as it were

hide

hide himſelfe from his Church, ſo that thee ſuffereth great affliction, it is for the euill behauiour of many which profeſſe his name. The Lord giue vs his aboundant grace, and make vs careful to retaine him.

THE SIXT SERMON

Chap III.

6 *Who is ſhe that commeth vp out of the wildernes like pillars of ſmoake, perfumed with Mirrhe and Incenſe, and with all the ſpices of the Merchant.*

7 *Behold his bed which is Salomons: three-ſcore ſtrong men are round about it, of the valiant men of Iſrael.*

8 *They all handle the ſword, and are expert in warre, euery man hath his ſword vpon his thigh, for the feare by night.*

9 *King Salomon made himſelfe a Palace of the trees of Lebanon.*

10 *He made the pillars thereof of ſiluer, and the pauement thereof of gold, the hangings thereof of purple, whoſe middeſt was paued with the loue of the daughters of Ieruſalem.*

11 *Come forth yee daughters of Zion, and behold*

behold the King Salomon with the crowne, wherewith his Mother crowned him in the day of his marriage, and in the day of the gladneſſe of his heart.

THe Church ſought Chriſt and neuer gaue ouer ſeeking vntill ſhee had found him, and brought him home vnto her mothers houſe, into the chambers of her that conceiued her. Chriſt indeed ſheweth himſelfe preſent vnto his deare Spouſe here below, but not that ſhe is to make account that his ſpecial abode with her is here on earth, but that ſhee muſt aſcend vp vnto his houſe, euen vnto the chambers of the heauenly Palace, for to that end and purpoſe doth he come downe vnto her. Here therefore is ſhewed the effect of this her finding and laying hold of him, namely, that he hath perfumed her with his ſweet graces, & made her fit & meet to aſcend vp with him vnto his royal Palace which is here deſcribed. Come then vnto the words, *Who is ſhe that aſcendeth vp out of the wildernes, &c.* The Bridegrome (as it ſeemeth) doth vtter this ſpeech, not being ignorant, or hauing the leaſt doubt who ſhe is, but in way of admiration or wonderment, to draw vs to the due conſideration of the greatneſſe, and excellencie

cie of the thing. It is no ſmall worke that the Bride, euen the whole companie of the faithfull, doe in heart and minde aſcend vp into the heauens. Our affections, and all the powers of our mind are wholy of themſelues bent downeward to this world, euen to the earth & earthly things. It is Chriſt then that maketh her to aſcend vp out of the wilderneſſe: it is the mightie power and operation of his grace. For marke how when ſhe had ſo earneſtly ſought after him, when at the laſt ſhe had found him, when ſhee had laid hold on him, and would not let him goe vntil ſhe had brought him vnto her mothers houſe, and euen into the Chambers, how it followeth by and by, who is this that aſcendeth vp out of the wilderneſſe? This is it that I ſaid, Chriſt commeth down vnto his Spouſe here on earth, that he may cauſe her to mount vp into the heauens, which we ſee doth follow; ſuch is the power and effectuall working of his grace. But what is the wilderneſs out of which ſhee aſcendeth? It is the world, euen the corrupt and miſerable eſtate that wee are all in by nature. In a wilderneſſe there is no tilling, no ſowing, no planting, no dreſſing, no good fruite, but all lyeth waſte, barren and deſolate. Euen ſo it is with all mankinde, by nature there is nothing but barrenneſſe. God planteth, tilleth and dreſſeth his Church, ſhe is (as S. *Paul* ſaith, 1. Cor. 3.) Gods husban-

husbandrie, ſhee is made fruitfull to the Lord: but the whole world beſide, out of which ſhee aſcendeth, doth remaine as a moſt deſolate and barren wildernesſe. There groweth not in it any one ſweet thing at all, but all noyſome ſtinking and abhominable weeds. All the godly which are here repreſented vnder the perſon of the Spouſe, doe aſcend out of this barren gulfe. And the worke is wonderfull and marueilous: but eſpecially if you marke how ſhee aſcendeth vp. It is ſaid, *euen like pillars of ſmoke*. What meaneth this? That muſt you gather by the wordes that follow, which are theſe, *perfumed with myrrhe & Incenſe, and with all the ſpices of the Merchant*: or as it may rightly be tranſlated, more excellent then all the duſt of the Merchant. The godly doe not while they liue here aſcend vp in body into the heauens: but their faith: their hope: their loue, their prayers and thankeſgiuing, with ſuch like, doe like pillars of ſmoke of ſweete Incenſe, aſcend vp before the Lord: and all theſe pillars of ſmoke of ſweet odours ariſe from hence, that Chriſt hath perfumed her with the heauenly graces of his ſpirit, which he calleth mirrhe and Incenſe, which bee ſaith doth excell all the duſt, that is to ſay all the ſweet ſpices of the merchant. Shee is then perfumed with the graces of Chriſt, and ſo made ſweet and fit to aſcend vp vnto God in the heauens. She aſcendeth vp out of a wilder-

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nes, where no good nor sweet thing groweth, and yet she aboundeth with all sweet perfumes, which ascend vp euen like vnto pillars of smoke. Is not this a wonderfull thing? From whence hath shee these sweete fruites in the wildernesse? Euen as I told you before, she sought him whom her soule loueth, yea she neuer gaue ouer seeking vntill she had found him, shee laide hold on him, and would not let him depart: and here is the fruit of her labour, hee perfumeth her with all sweete and precious things, and maketh her fit for to ascend vp into the heauens. O Beloued, shall not this inflame our mindes to seeke after Christ, and neuer to giue ouer for any trauaile, inconuenience or danger, vntill wee finde him? Yea to lay fast holde on him, and to retaine him, that hee may thus perfume vs with his spirit and gracious giftes, and so make vs fit to dwell with him in the heauens? In our selues, and of our own nature we stinke, we are loathsome and abhominable, fit for the stinking pit of hell, and not meet for to ascend vp into the heauenly palaces. If we finde him, and as the holy Spouse saith lay hold on him, and retaine him, he will indeed perfume vs, and make vs full of all sweet things, through which wee shall be acceptable vnto God. They are worthie to lie and rot in their filthines, and so with detestation to be cast out of the presence of the Lord, who will not seek vp so diuers and gra-

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cious a Sauiour. What is the cause that men generally are so addicted vnto this world, so that they doe not ascend vp out of it? And what is the reason that they bee not perfumed with sweete things, but doe cast forth continually the stinke of vncleane and abhominable vices? Surely euen this, they doe not with the holy Bride arise out of their beds to seeke Christ, and neuer cease vntill they haue found him. No, no, there is small and cold seeking after him. I would to God it might enter into our mindes, and bee throughly fixed in vs, what a treasure we shall obtain, when wee find him. Some will replie, that they seeke him, but they cannot finde those thinges which the Spouse here found. It may be (say they) Christ will not bee found of all that seeke him. They could bee content for to seeke him more earnestly, if they were sure that they should finde him. Surely this is the tempter, this is our owne negligence and vnbeliefe, and it is very good for vs to beware of it. Wee see what wonderfull goodly thinges they attaine vnto, which find Christ, laying hold on him, and not leauing him. Wee see also by the speeches of the Spouse, that he is not easily found. If we seeke a little and in cold manner, euen as it were vpon our bed: because wee find him not, we are readie to imagine, and the Diuell doth also suggest, that it is but lost labour for to seeke him. But doubtles all those that seek

him

him in vprightnes of heart, and that ſeeke him diligently and carefully, not giuing ouer, ſhall find him. Is it not his promiſe, *Seeke and you ſhall find, aske and you ſhall receiue, knocke and it ſhall bee opened vnto you? For whoſoeuer asketh receiueth, and hee that ſeeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it ſhall be opened.* Matth. 7.7.8. If therefore we haue ſought, and yet finde not that we are perfumed, with Mirrhe and Incenſe, ſweeter then all the Spices of the Merchant, and that we doe aſcend vp out of this barren wilderneſſe, let vs know that wee haue not ſought ſo feruently as we ought to ſeeke: let vs then be more diligent.

It followeth, *Behold his bed which is Salomons: threeſcore ſtrong men round about it of the valiant men of Iſrael. They all handle the ſword, and are expert in warre: euery man hath his ſword vpon his thigh for the feare by night.* It was ſaid in the former verſe, that ſhee aſcended vp out of the wilderneſſe. And whether doth ſhe aſcend, but vnto the habitation of the great King her ſpouſe, to lodge and to dwell with him for euer? Here is therefore vnder a ſhadow a deſcription of that heauenly lodging. The ſhadow is taken from the Bride bed, and from the Bride chamber of King *Salomon*. For Chriſt is the true *Salomon*, euen the King of peace, of whom *Salomon* that wrote this Song was a figure. It was

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and is the maner, that Kings haue euery night a watch about their lodging by part of their gard, that there be no treason wrought, but that the King may sleep without feare. It seemeth by this place, that King Salomon had euery night threescore valiant men of his gard, experte in battell, and with their swords girded to their thigh, that did keepe the watch, that so hee might sleepe in safety. And because it falleth out sometimes that treacheries bee committed by some that are put in trust to watch and to garde, here is mention made that these are of the valiant men of Israel, they bee true hearted and trustie. Needfull it is that they should bee no weake ones, nor no cowardly persons: and more needfull it is also, that they should be in a readines, and haue their weapons prepared: and most needfull of all, that they bee such as will not bee corrupted any way, but haue faithful hearts. If they were mighty and valiant men, and right well appointed, and not of the valiant men of Israell, that is to say, sound and true hearted, the danger were the greater. But *Salomons* bed is safely garded with these valiant men of Israel, whereby is figured, how safely from all danger and feare, the Church shal rest with Christ in the heauens. Here bee many enemies which seeke to destroy the Church. Sathan the Prince of darknes with all his Angels & with all the infernal powers waiteth day and night to

worke all the miſchiefe that he can. He rayſeth vp cruell and bloodie tyrants, which breath out threatnings and terror, as if they would vtterly ſeparate her from Chriſt. But when the faithfull haue found Chriſt, and hee hath ſo repleniſhed them with the gifts and graces of his Spirit, that they mount vp into the heauens by a true and liuely faith, with feruent zeale and vehement affection, then howſoeuer they be troubled, moleſted, afflicted, and diſquieted here in the worlde, yet they reſt ſafe and in peace with him aboue. That place is ſafely garded, thither can no enemie approach to worke any miſchiefe, or to put the ſpouſe in any feare. He, euen that beauenly *Salomon*, is garded with his mightie Angels, which are miniſtring ſpirits, ſent foorth to miniſter for their ſakes, which ſhall inherite ſaluation. Heb. 1. Theſe be true Iſraelites indeed, holy and faithfull: no vnfaithfulneſſe can come neere vnto them. Let vs therefore touching this point remember theſe wordes of our Sauiour vnto his Apoſtles, when hee was euen readie to depart from them out of this world, ſaying, *Theſe things haue I ſpoken vnto you, that in me you might haue peace, in the world you ſhall haue afflictions: but be of good comfort, for I haue ouercome the world.* Iohn 16. verſe 33. Then howſoeuer the caſe doth ſtand with the godly here in the world, they reſt in ſafetie and peace with Chriſt. But

this is not all which the Bride ſhall obtaine, by her aſcending vp out of the Wilderneſſe vnto the palace of her welbeloued, for it falleth out that one may dwell ſafe from danger, and be wel garded in a place of ſmall eaſe and pleaſure: make therefore what a deſcription now followeth of the heauenly bride-chamber, how rich, how goodly and precious it is to dwell in. For here it is figured by King *Salomons* bride-chamber. *King Salomon made himſelfe* (ſayth our Engliſh tranſlation) *a palace of the trees of Lebanon.* Some take it to be a Coach, in which he was carried with his Queene. The word is *apirion*, which is not found elſewhere in all the holy Scriptures. It is deriued of *Parah*, which ſignifieth to flouriſh and bring forth fruit. So that moſt fitly it may be here taken for a royall and ſumptuous Bride-chamber, which King *Salomon* built in his owne palace. This Bride-chamber (which was for the daughter of *Pharaoh* King of Egypt, whom *Salomon* married, and for whom he built an houſe, as the holy Scripture doth witneſſe, 1. King. 9. verſ. 24.) touching the timber, was of the trees of Lebanon, that is, of goodly Cedars: for Lebanon in the Scriptures is renowned for Cedars: That kinde of wood is very durable. Then it is ſaid, that the *pillars were of ſiluer, and the pauement of gold, and the hangings of purple.* Here is a goodly rich thing, and pleaſant to lodge in. And then

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it is added further, *whose middest was paued with the loue of the daughters of Ierusalem.* This is more darke to be vnderstood than the rest. The middest is to be taken for the inward parts of this Chamber, which were paued with loue, that is, as wee may vnderstand it, wrought with louely or most excellent workes, by the daughters of Ierusalem. For so I take it this latter clause is most fitly to be translated, rather than to say of the daughters of Ierusalem. For he speaketh of the excellent needle-workes, of the stuffe and furniture, which the skilfullest needle-women in Ierusalem had wrought. Here then are all thinges rich and sumptuous, yea these things are rare and excellent, euen among the greateſt Princes of the world. For the glorie of King *Salomon* did much excell, hee being a figure of the heauenly King of glorie, our Lord Iesus Christ: but they are scarce worthie to be named, or esteemed to be a shadow of that heauenly palace, which is here resembled by them. For what are buildings of Cedar? What is siluer or gold or purple? yea, what are all the fineſt needle-workes vnto that heauenly habitation of Christ, in which his Church shall dwell with him for euer? Wee see also how the new Ierusalem, the Citie of God, is shewed vnto S. *Iohn* in a vision, Reuel. 21. and there described to be most rich and precious, as being of most pure gold, shining through like

Christall and of Pearle. Then besides the safetie that the godly shall rest in with Christ, where no aduerse power shall approach any way to hurt or annoy them, their dwelling shall be also most delectable and glorious. True it is that *Salomons* Queene did dwell in a palace verie goodly and sumptuous, and such as the very Kings and Princes of the earth might euer wonder at, so great was the glorie and royaltie which his God gaue him. But yet the same palace that she dwelt in, and all her glorie, was nothing to the Palace which Christ hath prepared for his beloued spouse the Church. Then is there sufficient cause to moue all the children of God to ascend vp out of this Wildernesse, vnto this heauenly palace. And aboue all things let vs marke this well, into what manner of place and vnto what manner of person we must ascend vp vnto: for that will put vs in minde what manner of persons wee ought to be: vncleane persons are not meete to enter and dwell in such a Palace, as it is written, *There shall enter into it no vncleane thing, neither whatsoeuer worketh abhomination or lyes*, Reuel. 21. 27. And iudge in your selues, are the vnholy, that stinke in their wickednesse, in any sort to be ioyned vnto the Lord Iesus Christ? No verily brethren, all that shall dwell with him must bee sweete and cleane. And therefore marke how the Spouse is said *to ascend vp out of the Wilder-*

Wildernesse, perfumed with Myrrhe and Incense, sweeter than all the spices of the Merchant. Shee is decked and made sweete to goe dwell in such a place and with such a person. O Lord how little is this regarded? It doth please men well to heare that the heauenly habitation is prepared, and that the godly shall there dwell with Christ their King, in euerlasting glorie, and some speeches they cast forth, expressing a desire to come to the same: but where are they almost, which seeke to be perfumed and made sweete and fit to goe vp thither? Doe not many which professe that they hope to goe thither, and to dwell with the Lord of glorie, yet still continue in their vncleanenesse, and doe not seeke to purge themselues, and to be perfumed with the sweete graces of the holie Ghost? These say that they looke for the life to come: but I pray you can it be said of them, that they ascend vp perfumed with Myrrhe and Incense? There are none that ascend vp to Heauen, but they that are sweete. Such filthie slouens are fit to dwell in the stinking dungeon of hell, and thither they shall be thrust, vnlesse they repent and alter their manners.

Now let vs come to the last verse of this chapter, which is in these words: *Come forth ye daughters of Zion, and behold the King Salomon with the Crowne, wherewith his mother crowned him in*

the day of his marriage, and in the day of the gladneſſe of his heart. Firſt, it is not eaſie to proue or to ſhew for certainetie who vttereth this ſpeech. We ſee it is directed vnto the daughters of Zion: the ſumme of it is to incite them to come foorth, and to behold the glorie of King *Salomon*, and by King *Salomon* is meant the Lord Ieſus; he is the true *Salomon*, hee is the King of peace. It is then his crowne and glorie, which theſe daughters of Zion are willed to come forth and behold. It is not like then that Chriſt vttereth this, but rather wee may take it to be the ſpeech of the Church vnto all her daughters: here may ariſe another doubt; Is Chriſt this King *Salomon*, that is crowned with honour and glorie in the day of his marriage? Is he crowned by his mother? Who is this his mother? And how doth ſhe ſet this crowne vpon his head? And when was hee married? True it is, that the holy Scriptures doe ſet forth, that Chriſt is as yet but betrothed, and that, as we haue ſhewed before, the day of his marriage ſhall be at the laſt day, euen at the end of this world. How then are they willed to behold that glory before it come? I anſwer that the words may be tranſlated more rightly thus, *in the day of his betrothing*: but if we will take it as it is tranſlated, *in the day of his marriage*, yee muſt know, that faith beholdeth thinges inuiſible, and thinges to come. And

touching this queſtion, Who is that his mother that doth crowne him? Or let it be, that the mother of King *Salomon* did in the day that hee was betrothed, or when the marriage day was, ſet a crowne vpon his head, yet this wee know, that it is *God that crowneth Ieſus with honour and glorie*, as we reade Pſalme 8 and Heb. 2. 9. It is moſt true that God hath aduanced Ieſus Chriſt, and ſet the crowne of glorie vpon him; that is, out of controuerſie; and yet withall his mother doth alſo after a ſort ſet the crowne of glorie vpon his head. *Seeing the Church is the fulneſſe of him that filleth all in all.* Epheſ. 1. verſe 23. The Church doth honour and glorifie Chriſt, and the Church ſometimes is ſet forth to be the mother of Chriſt: Reu. 12. But to let paſſe theſe things, let vs conſider that which is the chiefe and principall matter in this ſentence, how wee are called vpon to come foorth, and to behold this glorie of Chriſt: For all the faithfull ſoules be the daughters of Zion. And looke how the daughters of Ieruſalem, ſitting or remaining in their houſes, in their chambers and cloſets, could not behold the glorie of King *Salomon*, and therefore they be willed to come foorth of their dores; euen ſo, if wee will beholde the great King in his moſt excellent glorie, wee muſt come out of our dores, wee muſt come out of our ſelues, otherwiſe wee cannot ſee his glorie.

We are in our ſelues ſhut vp in a darke dungeon, we are called vpon to come forth into the cleare light of faith, and to remoue away thoſe thicke walls of the fleſh, which are betweene our ſight and Chriſt. Moſt true it is, that whoſoeuer doe not come foorth of themſelues, but will ſeeke Chriſt in their owne reaſon, and carnall imaginations, they cannot behold his glorie. This is a matter of great importance, and by no meanes to be neglected: for if you haue a deſire to bee drawne out of this vaine world, in our affections and deſires, then are we to goe forth, and to behold the glorie of Chriſt: for what can mooue or draw vs more than this, when we behold the greatneſſe of his glory, and conſider withall, that he is crowned therewith, euen to this end, that we may be partakers with him in the ſame. You ſee then, that it is vnto ſpeciall purpoſe, that wee are called vpon to come forth, and with the eyes of faith to behold in daily meditation the glorie of Chriſt Ieſus, in which his Church ſhall raigne with him. If we doe this, we ſhall eaſily deſpiſe all the glorie and pleaſures of this world, as droſſe. Our Lord worke it in vs, Amen.

THE

THE SEVENTH SERMON.

CHAP. IIII.

1 *Behold thou art faire my loue, behold thou art faire, thine eyes are as the Doues: among thy lockes, thine haire is like the flocke of goates, which looke downe from the mountaine of Gilead.*

2 *Thy teeth are like a flocke of sheepe in good order, which goe up from the washing, which euery one bring out twinnes, and none is barren among them.*

3 *Thy lippes are like a threed of skarlet, and thy talke is comely, thy temples are within thy locks as a peece of a Pomegranate.*

4 *Thy necke is as the tower of David, built for defence, a thousand shields hang therein, euen all the targets of the mightie men.*

5 *Thy two breasts are as two young Roes that are twinnes, feeding among the Lillies.*

6 *Vntill the day breake and the shadowes flie away, I will goe to the mountaine of Myrrhe, and to the mountaine of Incense.*

7 *Thou art all faire my loue, and there is no spot in thee.*

8 *Come*

8 *Come with me from Lebanon my Spouſe, come with me from Lebanon, looke from the top of Amanah, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the dennes of the Lyons, and from the mountaines of the Leopards.*

THis Chapter, euen all the whole, except two verſes, the 15 and 16, is the ſpeech of the Bridegroome, conſiſting in prayſes and commendations of the Bride, in declaration of his loue towards her, and in promiſes made vnto her. Theſe three things be exceeding comfortable, and may indeede, if wee be not too too dull, euen glad our hearts. For conſider that he is the King of glorie, and who is able to ſet forth the excellencie of his beautie? Shall it not then ſeeme a great thing vnto vs, that he being in the very top and heigth of all glorie, doth ſo admire the beautie of the Church, and is ſo greatly delighted with it, and promiſeth to take her into his preſence? This will appeare more in the particulars: thus hee beginneth to praiſe her beautie. *Behold thou art faire my loue, behold thou art faire.* This is a generall commendation, and that which followeth, is a praiſe by ſeuerall and particular parts. How great and excellent the beautie is of the whole Church, and ſo of the-

querie faithfull ſoule, doth appeare by this, that he doth as it were wonder thereat, and repeateth and doubleth his ſpeech, *Behold thou art faire my loue, behold thou art faire.* For when the Scripture ſayth, *Behold*, it noteth for the moſt part a thing to be wondered at, and the doubling of the ſpeech doth augment the matter. But here lieth the chiefe thing to be conſidered, that ſuch a one as our Lord Ieſus doth wonder at her beautie. Such as bee brought vp in a poore, baſe, and beggerly condition, if they chaunce to ſee one in goodly rich attire, doe wonder thereat. But let the ſame perſon ſo richly decked, come into the preſence of a glorious Emperour, and hee doth not wonder, vnleſſe indeede the decking be exceeding great. The poore and of meane eſtate may wonder at a little, but he cannot. Euen ſo may you conſider it in our Lord Ieſus Chriſt: for hee dwelleth in glorie and beautie vnſpeakeable, and yet as it were wondereth at the beautie of his Spouſe, which is a full declaration, that her beautie excelleth. What ſhould more inflame our hearts vnto vertue and true godlineſſe than this, that it maketh men ſo faire and precious in the eyes of the Lord? But whence hath the Spouſe this beautie? I neede not ſtand to ſhew againe, that hee of one that was foule, ſtinking, and deformed,

formed, hath made her cleane, sweet, and beautifull; for all her beautie is from him. It will further be obiected, that this is spoken of the Church militant vpon earth, in which euen the perfectest haue great deformities, how then can he say, *Behold thou art faire my loue, behold thou art faire?* I answere, that the Lord beholdeth his spouse, not in her selfe, but in himselfe, that is washed, iustified, sanctified, decked and cloathed with his graces. Thus much touching the generall commendation: now to that which is by the particular parts, first we are to remember that all the true beleeuers are knit together by one spirit, and do make one mysticall bodie in Christ Iesus, 1. Cor. 12. verse 13. So then as there be in the naturall bodie of a man diuerse members, which according to their seuerall gifts haue diuerse functions and operations, the holy Ghost ascribeth the like to the mysticall bodie, as S. *Paule* setteth forth at large, 1. Cor. 12. Then further we are to obserue, that those are of right singular beautie which are beautifull and comely in all parts. If one part be comely, and another deformed, then there is not perfect beautie: but the Church iustified and sanctified in Christ, is glorious in all parts. Our Sauiour here doth begin with the eyes, saying, *Thine eyes are as the Doues*: as much as to say, thine eyes are like to the eyes of the Doues: of all parts in the humane bodie,

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if the face be not comely, beautifull, and well fauoured, there is little or no reckoning made. And of all parts in the face, the eyes are a principall ornament, if they be beautifull, and a chiefe deformitie to the whole if they be not. Now the eyes of the Church are here commended, by comparing them to the eyes of the Doues, which are chaſte, ſimple, and verie beautifull to looke vpon. What ſhall wee take theſe eyes to be? It ſhould ſeeme by Saint *Paule*, 1. Cor. 12. that the Paſtors and Teachers are the eyes in the Church, for they are to giue light to the whole bodie, through the heauenly and pure doctrine, and ſo it may be taken here: but I take it rather in this place, that the eyes are true and liuely faith in all the godly: for by faith we looke vp to the Lord, and behold things inuiſible. Doubtleſſe this eye of faith is ſimple, it is chaſte, it is verie beautifull and precious in Gods ſight. *Without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God*, as it is written, Hebr. 11. verſe 6. Let vs ſtudie and labour then by all poſſible meanes to get this precious iewell, and euen to be rich in it. Would you not be glad to caſt vp ſuch an eye to the Lord, as he may be delighted withall, as with an eye that is ſimple, chaſte, and beautifull.

The next clauſe is in theſe wordes, *among thy lookes*, which is expounded diuerſly. For ſome do take it to ſignifie, that the locks of haire hang

downe

downe, so as the eyes doe appeare from within them. And other are of this minde, that he saith, beside thy lockes, or as it were thy lockes remoued. Howsoeuer it is, this is most certaine, that according to the manner of the attire which the chast virgins did vse about their haire for modestie and comelinesse, the Bride is here commended. Then he addeth, *thy haire is like a flocke of Goates, which looke downe from Mount Gilead.* It is taken, that by the haire are meant the multitude of the faithfull, especially when they be assembled to heare the Word, and other holy exercises of Religion. And it is fitly resembled by a flocke of Goates, feeding vpon Mount Gilead. That Mountaine was fruitfull with holesome pasture, and a goodly sight it was to behold a flocke of Goates spread all abroad, and feeding thereupon. Where the Lords people are assembled and are fed with the heauenly foode, it is in his eyes a goodly and a comely thing: also happie are they who with the chosen doe assemble vpon his holy Mountaine, and there taste of the spirituall foode to the satisfying of their soules.

In the next place he commendeth the teeth, saying, *Thy teeth are like a flocke of sheepe in good order*, or rather, which are equall, *which goe vp from the washing, which euerie one bring out twinnes, and none is barren among them.* Touching the

the teeth in the naturall bodie, the comelineſſe and beautie of them is in theſe three things: firſt, that they be euen, or of equall length and bigneſſe: ſecondly, that they be white and cleane: thirdly, that each row anſwere fitly to the other, and none be wanting. To ſet forth theſe things, they be likened to a flocke of ſheepe, which be of equall ſtature, or of an euen bigneſſe, that is for the firſt. Then that they come vp from the waſhing, ſo that being euen newly waſhed, they be white and cleane, that is the ſecond. In the laſt place as twinnes are anſwerable one to the other, ſo in the two rowes euery tooth meeteth fit with another, and ſo there is no gappe, there is none wanting. Now it may be demanded, what are the teeth of the holy Church? To anſwere this, wee muſt conſider, that the Lord giueth a ſpirituall foode to his Church, which euery faithfull ſoule feedeth vpon. This foode is the Lord Ieſus himſelfe; *he is the bread of life that came downe from heauen.* Iohn 6. And becauſe hee is fed vpon through faith, *and faith commeth by hearing of the word.* Rom. 10. The holy word of God is alſo called the foode of our ſoules: for Saint *Peter* calleth it the *ſincere milke, which hee willeth vs to couet as new-borne babes, that wee may grow thereby,* 1. Pet. 2. verſe 1. And S. *Paule* telleth the Corinths, *that they were carnall, euen babes in Chriſt, and that he gaue them milke to drinke,*

drinke, and not strong meate. 1. Cor. 3. Where we may see, that the Word of God, for the diuerse manner of the deliuering of it, is milke, and it is strong meate. Hereupon the Teachers are called Pastors, that is to say, feeders of the flockes. Now by the teeth of the Church, wee may very well vnderstand those graces, which are giuen vnto euery faithfull soule, by which the soule hath power to feede vpon the Word, and vpon Christ. Or by the teeth may well be vnderstood the godly and faithfull Pastors, who as S. *Paul* speaketh, *doe cut and diuide the word of truth aright vnto the people.*

It followeth, *Thy lippes are like a thred of skarlet.* Here are two things commended in the lips, as that they be small, which is resembled by a thred, and that they be of red colour, and therefore he mentioneth skarlet. And if a virgine be neuer so beautifull, if her speech be rude and vnpleasant, it disgraceth all; therefore hee addeth, *thy speech is comely.* The speech of man declareth what is in the heart: for our Sauiour saith, *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* And a good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth foorth good things; and an euill man out of the euill treasure of his heart bringeth forth euill things. By nature there is nothing in mans heart but that which is corrupt and abhominable, and so in all men, as the

Apostle

Apostle saith, *the poyson of Aspes is vnder their lippes*. Rom. 3. But by the operation of the holy spirit, the hearts of the faithfull are replenished with faith, with loue, with zeale, and with many goodly vertues, and then the speech is according. Wherefore he saith, *thy speech is comely*. Let men consider this well: for many men make small reckoning of speech. Wordes say they (when they vtter all the vanitie and filthinesse of their mind) are no harme. Tell them, that men shall giue an account at the day of iudgement for euery idle word, and they will lightly answer, that God hath greater matters to looke after, than to take account of idle words. Let these alone in their filthinesse, it behoueth euery one that will be acceptable vnto Christ, and beautifull in his eyes, to haue comely speech. Then hee addeth, *Thy temples are within thy lockes as a peece of Pomegranate*. This is to be vnderstood both of the temples and of the cheekes, and their beautie is commended, that together with the faire white there is a mixture of red. That he sayth, *within thy lockes*, it is the same word which he vseth before about the eyes. And as I noted it is taken diuersly: Either that the lockes did hang vpon the temples, and so to take it, that they be within the lockes, or from within the lockes, that is, the lockes being remoued. Howsoeuer it is, as I said before, this is certaine, that the modestie,

the chaft and comely manner of wearing of lockes is here commended.

In the next place he commeth to the necke, ſaying, *Thy necke is like to the tower of Dauid, built for a defence, a thouſand ſhields hang therein, euen all the targuets of the mightie men.* It doth appeare plainely by this place, that King *Dauid* built a tower in Ieruſalem for an Armorie: it is tranſlated in our Engliſh, for defence: but the word doth ſignifie, for the hanging vp of ſharpe weapons, or weapons that had edge: and therefore is moſt fitly to be called an Armorie: alſo that which followeth maketh the matter cleare, that he ſaith, *a thouſand ſhields hang therein, euen all the targuets of the mightie men.* Then in this tower were layed vp the chiefe weapons of warre, vntill ſuch time as there ſhould be vſe for them. Vnto this tower doth the Lord compare the necke of his Church. It is long, ſtraight, and furniſhed with goodly thinges. To applie this vnto ſome ſeuerall perſons or functions in the Church, I will not curiouſly ſtand: but beſides the beautie and ſtately comelineſſe, I take it here is meant the force and power of the whole armour of God, which the holy Apoſtle ſetteth forth, Epheſ. 6. which indeede the Lord doth arme all the faithfull withall, that they may be able to ſtand againſt all the aſſaults of the diuell. The ſhields and targuets of the valiant men

of

of Iſrael were in the towet of *Dauid*: but in the Church is the armour and power of the mightie God.

Now to the breaſts: *Thy two breaſts* (ſaith he) *are as two young Roes that are twinnes, feeding among the Lilies.* The breaſts in a woman are for to nouriſh the infants which ſhee bringeth foorth: And the Church is the mother of all Gods children; when they be regenerate, ſhee doth nurſe them vp, and for that cauſe there are two breaſtes aſcribed vnto her. Moſt certaine it is, that whoſoeuer will grow vp in the Lord, he muſt ſucke his ſpirituall nouriſhment from theſe breaſtes. They be here highly commended, as to be like vnto two young Roes that be twinnes. They be like one another, they be full of very ſweet nouriſhment, as Roes that feede in a pleaſant paſture. Theſe breaſtes of the Church are ſaid by interpretors to be the two Teſtaments of the Lord, the old and the new. And verie agreeable to truth it is ſo to take them, ſeeing the Church doth not bring foorth anie children to God, nor nouriſh them with her owne doctrine, but with the moſt ſweete and wholeſome doctrine of the Lord. The two Teſtaments indeede, the old and the new, may very well be compared vnto twinnes, they agree, they both ſet foorth one heauenly doctrine, the one confirmeth the other.

If any man will obiect and say, these do containe the counsell and will of God, it is onely the doctrine of the Lord which they set foorth, how then can they bee called the breastes of the Church? I answere, that the like may be obiected touching any one thing which is praysed in her: for all that is beautifull and excellent in her, is of grace, and freely bestowed vpon her by Christ. All the holy bookes then of the olde Testament and of the new, euen the writings of the Prophets and Apostles, are the two breasts of the Church, and from them onely we must sucke the sincere milke of the Word, by which wee are to grow. Thus farre the Lord hath commended his Spouse by seuerall parts, not prosecuting euerie particular, but adding in the next verse saying one, that *she is all faire, and no spot in her*, which we will handle when we come vnto it. Now to that which followeth next: *Vntill the day breake, and the shadowes flie away, I will goe to the mountaine of Myrrhe, and to the mountaine of Incense.* We haue in the end of the second Chapter shewed what day it is which is spoken of, when bee saith, *vntill the day breake*: for there the Spouse did entreat her welbeloued, that vntill the day breake, and the shadowes flie away, hee would returne and be like a yong Roe vpon the mountaines of Bether. And here the Bridegroome seemeth to answer vnto her request. It may be referred

ferred (as I ſaid) to the time of Chriſts comming in the fleſh, when as indeede all the ſhadowes of the law did vaniſh and flie away, but more fitly to the great day of the generall iudgement, when as indeede all the ſhadowes, euen all errors, and all calamities ſhall vtterly vaniſh for euer, and the Church ſhall liue in glorious light, world without end. Now that he ſaith, he will vntill that day goe to the mountaine of Myrrhe, and to the mountaine of Incenſe, it may be taken two wayes. Firſt the heauens are the holy mountaine of the Lord, and there the prayſe and honour which the bleſſed Angels and ſpirits of the iuſt doe glorifie him withall, is as ſweete incenſe and precious myrrhe. So that the heauens may very well be called the mountaine of myrrhe, and the mountaine of incenſe. If we take it ſo, then it reſpecteth his aſcending into the heauens (as hee told his Diſciples) to prepare a place, where hee muſt (as Saint *Peter* ſheweth) remaine vntill the time of the reſtoring of all things: and then will hee come downe to fetch all his choſen, that where he is, there alſo may they be. Then the ſecond way is, that the mountaine of Myrrhe, &c. may be taken for the Church militant vpon earth, which is often called the Mountaine of the Lord. And very well it may be called the Mountaine of Myrrhe, and the Mountaine of Incenſe, becauſe there be the ſweete prayers and prayſes

of God offered vp, through the mediation of Ieſus Chriſt. And of this mountaine he ſayth, *Behold I am with you vnto the end of the world*, Matth. 28. For albeit our Lord is in the heauens, yet is he preſent with his Church vpon earth, highly eſteeming the faithfull and ſincere worſhip and ſeruice of his people. For this cauſe he appeared in viſion to Saint *Iohn*, Reuel. 1. in the middeſt of the ſeuen golden Candleſtickes, holding the ſeuen ſtarres in his right hand. The Church of Rome, as if he were abſent, hath ſet vp one to be his Vicar, to execute his office, euen to giue remiſſion of ſinnes, and life euerlaſting vnto all men. This is Antichriſt that taketh vpon him to be in Chriſts ſtead. But the godly doe by faith finde and feele the preſence of the Lord, they dwell in him, and he in them, they neede not, hauing the fountaine it ſelfe of liuing waters, ſeeke to thoſe ſtinking puddles.

It followeth, *Thou art all faire my loue, and there is no ſpot in thee.* Here is a very great praiſe giuen to the Bride, that her beautie is abſolute and perfect throughout all parts of her, and that there is no ſpot or blemiſh at all. From hence, as it ſeemeth, S. *Paule* draweth his ſpeech, when he ſayth, that *Chriſt gaue himſelfe for his Church, that he might ſanctifie it, and cleanſe it by the waſhing of water through the word: That hee might make it vnto himſelfe a glorious Church, not hauing*

ſpot

ſpot or wrinckle, or any ſuch thing; but that it ſhould be holy and without blame, Epheſ. 5. verſ. 25, 26, 27. How ſhall the Church make any doubt but that ſhe is loued of God, when ſhe is become thus glorious and pure, as not to haue in anie part ſo much as the leaſt ſpot or wrinckle of deformitie? For that one word *(mum)* which the Bridegroome here vſeth in the Hebrew Text, which is vſually expounded, *a ſpot*, S. *Paule* expreſſeth by all theſe, ſpot, wrinckle, or anie ſuch things. Then we ſee, that although the Bridegroome did not goe through all particular parts of his ſpouſe, to giue them their ſeueral commendation, as he did in diuers, yet he aſcribeth a full perfection of beautie vnto thē all, when he ſaith, *Thou art all faire my loue, and there is no ſpot in thee.* Such a glorious myſticall bodie is meete to be ioyned with ſo glorious a head: and if there were any deformitie remaining, how could it be vnited vnto him? But here it will be ſaid, how agreeth this with her owne ſpeech in the firſt Chapter, where ſhee ſayth, *I am blacke, but yet comely, and that ſhe is ſunne-burnt?* And how doth it agree with all thoſe places of holie Scripture, which teſtifie ſo plainely, that all the faithfull while they liue here be full of ſpots and deformities? I haue anſwered this before, namely, that men muſt not conſider or eſteeme the Church, as ſhe is in her ſelfe, or as ſhe is here in the world:

but wee muſt behold her in Chriſt, iuſtified and fully ſanctified in him, and as ſhe ſhall be at the day of marriage, when her whole trimming and decking ſhall be put on. And therefore thoſe heretikes and ſchiſmatikes, which from theſe places haue drawne their ſtrong imagination, touching the full puritie of the Church, while ſhe is vpon earth, and ſo haue condemned the true Church for her imperfections and ſinnes, are much deceiued. It may bee ſaid then, why doth not the Lord then rather ſay to his Spouſe, thou ſhalt be all faire my loue, and there ſhall be no ſpot in thee? I anſwere, that the Scripture for the certainetie of things to come, ſpeaketh of them as if they were preſent: becauſe God is vnchangeable in all his decrees, and none can hinder his worke.

Now remaineth the laſt verſe of that which I did reade: *Come with mee from Lebanon my ſpouſe, come with me from Lebanon, &c.* This may be expounded two wayes, either that the Lord doth promiſe to ſhew to his Spouſe the land of promiſe, or that hee promiſeth to draw her to himſelfe out of all places of the world. If we take it in the former ſence, that we are to remember, that the land of Canaan, promiſed to *Abraham* and his ſeede, was a figure of the heauenly inheritance: then when the ſight of this is promiſed, or the viewing of it from the top of thoſe hils,

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we are to be lifted vp to the conſideration of an higher matter, namely, to the beholding of that glorious inheritance, which ſhall laſt for euer. For by faith the godly doe behold the land of promiſe, euen the land of the liuing, which the Lord in great kindneſſe did ſhew vnto them. If we take it in the other ſence (which I ſuppoſe is the right) then the promiſe is this, that howſoeuer his ſpouſe is ſcattered and diſperſed among the nations of the world, he will take her vnto him. You know it is ſet downe, that the Lord will gather his elect from the foure windes, and from the vttermoſt parts of the earth. And it is to be marked, that he ſaith, from the denne of the Lyons, and from the mountaines of the Leopards. For the Church dwelleth here in the world among cruell and ſauage beaſts, which would vtterly deuoure her: but the Lord doth miraculouſly keepe her, and ſayth, ſhee ſhall come with him from among them. *The Lord draweth his out of great tribulation*, as the Elder telleth *Iohn*, Reuel. 7. verſe 14. And as S. *Paule* ſaith, *Through many troubles wee muſt enter into the kingdome of heauen.* Let vs not then faint.

THE

THE EIGHTH SERMON.

CHAP. IIII.

9 *My ſiſter, my ſpouſe, thou haſt wounded my heart, thou haſt wounded my heart with one of thine eyes, and with a chaine of thy necke.*

10 *My ſiſter, my ſpouſe, how faire is thy loue, how much better is thy loue than wine? and the ſauour of thine ointments than all ſpices?*

11 *Thy lippes, my ſpouſe, drop as hony combes, hony and milke are vnder thy tongue, and the ſauour of thy garments is as the ſauour of Lebanon.*

12 *My ſiſter, my ſpouſe, is as a garden incloſed, as a ſpring ſhut vp, and a fountaine ſealed vp.*

13 *Thy plants are as an orchard of Pomegranates, with ſweete fruits, of Camphire, Spikenarde.*

14 *Euen Spikenarde and Saffron, Calamus and Cinamon, with all the trees of Incenſe, Myrrhe, and Aloes, with all the chiefe ſpices.*

15 *O fountaine of the gardens, O Well of liuing waters, and the ſprings of Lebanon.*

16 *Ariſe O North, and come O South, and blow*

blow on my Garden, that the ſpices thereof may flow out: let my welbeloued come to his Garden, and eat his pleaſant fruit.

17 *I am come to my Garden my ſiſter, my ſpouſe, I gathered my Myrrhe with my ſpice, I eat mine honey combe with mine honey, I dranke my wine with my milke: eat O friends, drinke and make you merrie O welbeloued.*

THe holy Bridegroome proceedeth in commending of his Bride with rare and ſingular commendations, as wee ſhall beſt ſee in the particulars. And firſt he commendeth her beautie and decking to be ſuch, that it hath (as our Engliſh tranſlation ſayth) wounded his heart: which he alſo repeateth for vehemencie. If wee follow this tranſlation, then we muſt vnderſtand that his heart is wounded with loue: which is a verie vehement ſpeech, and doth indeed fitly expreſſe the ſence of this place, for it is his purpoſe to expreſſe an exceeding loue. But the ſame ſence remaining, we may ſay, thou haſt pluckt away mine heart my ſiſter, my ſpouſe, thou haſt pluckt away mine heart with one of thine eyes, &c. For it doth wonderfully ſet foorth the paſſion of loue, when a Bridegroome ſhall tell his Bride, that ſhee hath his heart, or that ſhe hath gotten his heart. Hereby ap-

appeareth the superabounding loue of our Lord Iesus Christ towards his Church, if that there be not any wordes sufficient fully to expresse the same. And here we may see againe what a glorie there is in the simple and chaft, and beautifull eye of faith; as also in those graces and spirituall ornaments, which are the fruits thereof, which are meant by a chaine of her necke. O that we could throughly consider of this, that with a burning zeale our hearts might alwaies be inflamed to seeke encrease of the cleare sight of this pure eye. I might stand to rehearse many places of the holy Scriptures, which doe commend faith; but none beyond this, that Christ saith, that his Spouse hath pluckt away his heart, or that shee hath gotten his heart with one of her eyes: O how doth the Lord delight in faith! If faith be one of her eyes (may some man say) which is the other? I answere, that because the Church is brought in vnder the person of a woman, there be two eyes ascribed vnto her, but withall wee must know that faith is the one and the other. The holy Ghost saith, *That the Gospell is the power of God to salvation, vnto every one that believeth, to the Iew first, and then to the Grecian, adding this reason, that the righteousnesse of God is revealed in it from faith to faith*, Rom. 1. 17, 18. speaking as if there were a double faith, when as indeede there is but one faith, but the same weaker & stronger.

And

And ſo in regard of the ſame encreaſe of the liuely faith, it may be called two eyes, as that place ſaith, from faith to faith. In the next place hee ſheweth how delightſome and pleaſant her loue is vnto him: he doth expreſſe it by the way of admiration and wonderment, ſaying, *How faire is thy loue, my ſiſter, my ſpouſe? How much better is thy loue then wine?* It is out of all doubt, that all good things come vnto vs, and vpon vs, from the loue of Chriſt, but contrariwiſe our loue towards him can adde nothing vnto his fulneſſe: & therefore poore ſoules, euen ſimple creatures here vpon the earth that doe loue him, haue theſe temptations euery one of them at one time or other: I loue Chriſt Ieſus from the very bottome of mine heart, but what regard can he haue of the loue of ſuch a poore ſillie wretch as I am? What can my loue be in his eyes? I feele indeede that I loue him with a loue vnfained. Behold here beloued, vnto your comfort, what he pronounceth of the loue, wherewith euery faithfull ſoule doth loue him. How faire is thy loue my ſiſter, my ſpouſe? How much better is thy loue then wine? It hath beene noted in the firſt Chapter, that wine is put for all daintie things in a banquet, whereby it is manifeſt, that the loue wherewith wee loue the Lord Ieſus is marueilous accepted vnto him. Let vs come to this, to be ſure that we loue him, (not after our owne fantaſies) but with the true

ſpirituall loue, and then whatſoeuer temptation ariſeth to diſcourage vs, let vs be out of doubt that our loue is precious, delightſome, and acceptable vnto him. O will ſome man ſay, how ſhall I know that I loue the Lord Ieſus Chriſt with this ſincere loue, which he ſayth here is ſo beautifull in his eyes; and ſo much better than wine? I would faine loue him. I anſwere, thou knoweſt what is written, *If yee loue me, keepe my commaundements.* Yea there ariſeth all the doubt, for who is it that doth not daily tranſgreſſe the holy commaundements of God? We muſt therefore looke to this, how we can ſay with S. *Paule*, Rom. 7. *I delight in the law of God touching the inner man.* If we loue the truth, if we loue holineſſe, righteouſneſſe, and puritie. And if our ſoule doe loath and abhorre that which is vnpure and vncleane, though it ſticke ſo faſt in vs, that we cannot wholly caſt it off: let vs be out of all doubt, that we loue the Lord. O happie and bleſſed then are we, our loue cannot be lightly eſteemed in his eyes. Indeede ſuch as doe perſuade themſelues that they doe loue the Lord, and doe not in the zeale of puritie loath and deteſt iniquitie from the bottome of their hearts, but can take pleaſure therein, are vtterly deceiued. You know that S. *Iohn* caſteth ſuch downe as lyars, that ſay, *They loue God and keepe not his commaundements. The ſauour of her ointments*, which

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he ſaith, *is better than the ſauour of all ſweet ſpices*, is to be vnderſtood of thoſe heauenly gifts and graces of the holy Ghoſt, which are beſtowed vpon the faithfull, and for which they be called Chriſtians. There be indeede verie manie which profeſſe in word that they bee Chriſtians, but they know not what it is to be a true Chriſtian. For where is the ſweet ſauor of their ointments? What graces of the holy Ghoſt doe appeare in them? Nay, in ſtead of theſe, they doe in all places where they doe become, caſt foorth a loathſome ſtinke of their filthie wordes and wicked deedes. O beloued, let no man ſeduce and deceiue you. You haue many now adayes which are come to this depth of impietie, that whoſoeuer will not ioyne with them, to ſtinke in filthineſſe, they by and by in reproach tearme them Puritanes. This blaſphemie the Lord God will powre foorth his vengeance vpon one day, although his long ſuffering be ſuch, that he ſeemeth not to regard it. But as it is written, *He that is filthie, let him be filthie ſtill*: let them paſſe, that we may returne againe to the commendation of the Bride.

Thy lippes (ſaith he) *my ſponſe, drop as honey combes, honey and milke are vnder thy tongue, and the ſauour of thy garments is as the ſauour of Lebanon*. Here are in this verſe two thinges highly prayſed, her ſpeech, and her ſweet ſauour.

The

The former of these, euen her speech, is compared to the dropping of the honey combes: as the sweete droppes of honey that distill from the honey combes, so be the wordes which come from her mouth: for he saith, *Thy lippes drop as the honey combes.* And further, her speech is not onely most sweet, but holsome and nourishing: which is expressed in these words: *Honey and milke are vnder thy tongue*: honey and milke are for nourishment. These are excellent commendations, in which wee may note, what an alteration is wrought in the regenerate, and how farre they are changed from that which they were in themselues by nature. Our Sauior saith in the Gospell (as you know) *That out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*. A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth foorth good things; and an euill man, out of the euill treasure of his heart bringeth forth euill thinges: the tongue vttereth but that which is within. And what that is in the vnregenerate or naturall man, heare what Saint *Paule* alledgeth, *Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues they haue deceiued; the poyson of Aspes is vnder their lippes, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitternesse.* Rom. 3. 13, 14. Is not here a great difference? For cursing and bitternesse, whereof the mouth was full, the lippes now drop as the honey combes. In stead of the poyson of Aspes, vnder

their

their lips, honey and milk are vnder their tongue. Is not here I say, a wonderfull alteration? For are not they which are regenerate and sanctified in Christ Iesus much altered from that they were of themselues? When as for cursing and bitternesse, and for the poyson of Aspes, their lips doe drop as the honey combes, and honey and milke are vnder their tongue? Let vs consider of it yet more particularly. A naturall man hath nothing in him but meere rebellion against God: his hart is euill, stuffed full of bitter enmitie and hatred both of God and man. His words doe dishonour and blaspheme God; and they hurt and destroy men: on the other side, a man led and guided by the good spirit of the Lord, hath in him the loue of God, and the loue of men. Pure words doe flow from him, he confesseth the truth, the law of grace is vnder his tongue, hee vttereth the praise and glorie of God, he doth instruct and edifie men: euery way his words are sweete, yea they be most holesome and nourishing, they bee (as it is here said) honey and milke. Where shall wee finde these lippes which droppe as the honey combes? Where be those tongues vnder which there is honey and milke? What neede that question will some say? They be the lips and tongue of the Church, the lips and tongue of Christians. Goe among them and see if their lippes doe not drop as the honey combes. If we should againe

demaund, whither ſhall we go to ſeeke out thoſe Chriſtians, whoſe ſpeech is ſo ſweete and ſo holſome? Some man will ſay they be euery where, I hope we be all Chriſtians, God forbid elſe, ſay they. Then ſhall wee find that euery where mens lips doe drop as the honey combes, and that honey and milke is vnder their tongue. What are then theſe ſweete and holſome wordes, euery where to be heard? Are they not the ſmooth flattering and diſſembling ſpeeches, which many doe vſe? Are they not the lies and ſlanders of the multitude? Or bee they not the bitter reproches curſes, taunts and reuilings, which ouerflow in all places? Or the vaine babling, gibing and ieſting mixed with baudie wordes? Theſe bee the things which the lips of thouſand thouſands doe drop, and a man ſhall finde almoſt nothing elſe in all places, euen among thoſe which profeſſe themſelues to be Chriſtians and to be of the true Church. O Lord, if this be the true church which Chriſt doth here deſcribe (as it cannot bee denied) where ſhall we find her? Surely, they be but euen a few among the multitude, euen ſcattered here and there, whoſe lippes drop as the honey combes, vnder whoſe tongue is honey and milke, *Whoſe ſpeech* (as S. *Paul* willeth it ſhould be) *is alwaies gracious, powdred with ſalt, to know how to anſwere euery man* Coloſſ. 4. 6. *Euen ſuch as may Miniſter grace to the hearers.* Ephe. 4. 29.

O let vs not then deceiue our ſelues brethren: If our talke bee vaine and filthie, are wee the true Children of the Church? Shall it then be ſaid of vs, thy lips drop as the honey combes, honey and milke are vnder thy tongue, ſeeke to haue cleane hearts, that your words may bee ſweete? In the next wordes hee commendeth her good ſauour, ſaying: *The ſauour of thy garments is as the ſauour of Lebanon.* Lebanon was a place in which there did grow ſuch ſweet things, as caſt forth a delightſome ſauour. The bride is perfumed with ſuch graces, that all her garments doe ſmel ſweet. This is not meant of the bodily cloathing: for many of the Saints haue liued in pouerty, clothed in ſimple apparrell, yea euen in ſtinking priſons and dungeons. But it is to be vnderſtood of the ſpiritual clothing, where the filthie ragges of the old man are put off, and the new man is put on, *which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.* Coloſſ. 3. verſe 9. 10. This is the clothing of which it is ſaid, *Thou haſt a few names in Sardi, which haue not defiled their garments: and they ſhall walke with me in white, for they are worthie.* Reuel. 3. 4. He was caſt forth from the marriage that wanted the wedding garment. Matth. 22. For let a man neuer ſo impudently thruſt in himſelfe in his ſtinking clothes to be as one of the Church, yet he ſhall be thruſt out: for the garments of the bride are ſweete, e-

uen as the ſauour of Lebanon. All at this wedding haue their garments very ſweete. Thus haue we ſeene very great commendations of the Church: but yet here are further: for it followeth, *My ſiſter, my Spouſe, is as a garden encloſed, as a ſpring ſhutt vp, and a fountaine ſealed vp.* Here bee two ſimilitudes that doe ſet forth her praiſe. The one is of a garden that is incloſed: the other of a ſpring or fountaine ſhut vp and ſealed. This incloſure, this ſhutting vp and ſealing, is firſt to commend the chaſtitie of the church, that with a firme faithfulnes keepeth her ſelfe only to Chriſt. There is no entrance for any beſides him. Shee loueth, ſhe obeyeth and worſhippeth him, and vnto him ſhee reſerueth all her fruits. Shee doth not worſhip ſtrange Gods, ſhe runneth not a whoring after Idols, ſhe is encloſed and ſealed vp only vnto her welbeloued. Here is (I ſay) the chaſtitie of the bride. Then ſecondly it ſheweth that none others are partakers with her in thoſe heauenly treaſures, which ſhe receiueth through Chriſt. There bee many in the viſible Church which ſeeme to bee partakers, and make a great ſhew: but the truth is none are bleſſed, but onely the elect.

Then further wee muſt obſerue, that here are ioyned together a garden full of ſweete plants, and a ſpring and fountaine of liuing waters. If the beds and plants in a garden be not watered,

there

there can nothing grow, but all will wither and be fruitleſſe. This garden therefore is well watered: there is in it a ſpring of liuing waters which alwayes do flow, wherewith euery plant and precious herbe is watered. Theſe waters albeit they abound, yet doe they not flow forth of the garden, they bee ſhut vp and ſealed, none other garden or plants are watered by them. What bee theſe waters? Euen the holy and pure word of the Lord: the holeſome doctrine of the Scriptures. With this are all the ſweete plants of the Lords garden watred, according to the ſaying of Saint *Paul, I haue planted, Apollos hath watered,* 1. Cor. 3. verſe 6. Wherewith did *Paul* plant, or wherewith did *Apollos* water, but with the liuely word of the Lord? Or wherewith ſhall any plant grow vp to bring forth fruit vnto the Lord, but with the ſame word? You haue many indeed that regard not this, which yet take themſelues to be good plants: but they be vtterly deceiued, they be but baſtard ſtocks that bring forth ſowre and bitter fruits. For if they will grow and bring forth good fruit indeede, they muſt be continually watered with this fountaine: they muſt receiue in the holeſome word of God into their hearts and ſoules. Now ſome man may here obiect, that the doctrine of Gods word doth flow forth vnto all, it is not as a fountaine ſealed vp. Do not many reade it, heare it preached, and profeſſe

fesse it, which yet are not saued? I answere; that indeede after a sort the word of the Lord doth flow forth ouer multitudes, which are not the true Plants of the Lord, but shall be plucked vp: but it doth not water them, they haue not the liuely and effectuall working of it to make them grow and beare good fruite. They haue (at the least some of them) a taste thereof: but as water that falleth vpon a rock doth onely wet the outside, and not soften the rocke or the stone within: so their hearts remaine still hard as flint, and it doth not water them. This is it then, the word of God is common vnto many: but touching the liuely efficacie thereof to regenerate, to plant, to water and to make fruitfull, it is peculiar to the holy Church. She onely is that Garden, the fountaine in which this liuing water remaineth: her plants be all watered with it, and made fruitfull. If thou doest feele that the pure doctrine of God doth change thy heart and soften it, so that in stead of those stinking vices, which are in it by nature, thou doest bring forth vertues, then is not the fountaine sealed vp vnto thee: but if thou heare, and heare, and reade, and be not reformed, the fountaine is still sealed vnto thee, yea verily, the fountaine is still sealed vp vnto them that are not by reading or hearing the holy word watered, made to grow and to bring forth her fruit. Thus may wee see how the Church is shut vnto

Christ

Christ, bringeth forth her fruit onely to him, and watereth no plantes but her owne. And what plantes these are, the two next verses doe shew: for here are reckoned vp all manner of the best plantes. *Thy plantes* (saith he) *are as an orchard of Pomegranates with sweet fruites, as Camphire, and Spikenard, Euen Spikenarde and Saffron, Calamus and Cinnamon, with all the trees of Incense, Myrrh and Aloes, with all the chiefe spices.* Here is the goodliest garden that euer was heard of, in which be all these sweete plantes: here be sweet fruits, here be all the chiefe spices, and the sweete Incense, here is whatsoeuer is delectable and precious. I minde not to stand vpon these in particular, to shew the excellencie of euery of them, for that is needlesse: onely take the similitude in general, as if there were a goodly garden in which were all the most precious plantes vnder heauen, that doe bring forth the sweetest, the most holesome, the most daintie, and comfortable thinges that are in the world, and to this Christ likeneth his Church, euen his garden inclosed. By these goodly plantes then are meant all the faithfull, they be the Lords plants, they doe beare all these sweet and delectable fruites before mentioned. What a goodly garden hath the Lord planted to himselfe? These plants haue beene planted by the Lord in all ages by the Ministery of his holy Prophets and Apostles, and by the Ministerie of all

faithfull paſtors and teachers: as wee reade how *Paul* ſaith of himſelf, I haue planted, Theſe plants hath the Lord alſo watered from time to time by the hands of the ſame his ſeruants, euen with the pure waters of heauenly doctrine: as it is written, *Apollo* watereth. From hence the fruits aboue mentioned haue ſprung, as the ſound knowledge of God, true light, ſincere and liuely faith, ſtedfaſt hope, with vnfained loue to God and men, inuocation of the name of God, praiſe and thankeſgiuing vnto his holy maieſtie, humilitie, meekenes, gentlenes, long ſuffering, with all the workes of mercie, which proceeding from a ſanctified hart are ſweeter before the Lord, then all incenſe or the beſt ſpices. Happy, yea thrice happie are all thoſe men whom the Lord hath vſed, and doth vſe as his faithfull inſtruments, to plant and to water ſuch a garden, and to make it bring forth ſuch fruites. What greater or more worthie worke can there bee in the world? Great ſhall their reward bee before the Lord God which are found faithfull labourers. Let all the Miniſters of the Goſpell conſider well of this place, and eſteeme it a farre greater bleſſing, then if they had all wordly dignities and preferments, when their labours are fruitful in planting and watring the plants of this garden. And let them not bee diſcouraged, that the blind world ſeeth not the glory of this worke, but deſpiſeth and re-

reproacheth it. Neither let the terrors which Sathan doth raise daunt or dismay them. If a man with al his labours may plant but euen some very few of these excellent plants, which are so deare and precious in the eyes of the Lord, or water them so as they become fruitfull in those forenamed fruites, what a glory is it? What should a Minister of the Gospell looke after besides this? On the other side, let the destroyers and layers waste of this garden of the Lord, or such as hinder the growth & fruitfulnes of the yong plants, behold here what an heauie iudgement of God hangeth ouer their heads. O how grieuous is it in the sight of the Lord which they doe? Let it be that an earthly prince had such a garden with plants of Pomegranates, with sweete fruites as Camphire, Spikenarde, Saffron, sweete Calamus, and Cinamon, with all the trees of Incense, Myrrhe, and Aloes, with all the chiefe spices, and men should enter into it, and destroy or lay it waste, would he endure it at their hands? How then will the Lord of Lords abide that such wicked men shall destroy or hinder his plants, which so far passe those earthly plants in price, and not be reuenged? You know what a woe our Sauiour in the Gospell doth denounce against him that shal offend one of those little ones that trust in him, saying, *It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his necke, and that he were*

cast

cast into the bottome of the Sea. How small regard of the people of God haue some had; esteeming them little better then swine? What care they for planting or watring, they know not how precious the plants be? They esteeme themselues highly, the garden which they bee in, they weigh not how they lay wast,

Let vs proceed. As it is a most worthie worke to bee a true planter or a waterer of this garden, which is so goodly and precious in the eyes of Christ; so is it a most happie thing to bee a right plant. And here let euery man looke well onto himselfe: we all professe the name of Christ, and so to be plants in this garden. Look to the fruits before named, which the right plants doe bring forth. They be not pride, vaine glorie, nor selfe loue: they be not curfing and swearing, lying and slaundering, they bee not dicing, drinking and whoring, they bee not enuie, harred and malice, or a number such like. These be stinking and abhominable fruits before the Lord. If thou beare such, what shall it auaile thee that thou standest for a time as a plant in the Church? For thou shalt bee rooted out. True it is, that the inuisible Church there bee many stinking and noysome weedes, many bastard plantes which bring forth most noysome fruites, they doe hurt and hinder what they can, the true plants, but the Lord doth put difference, hee will root them all out & preserue

ſerue euery true plant. It doth then ſtand vs greatly vpon to looke what fruit we bring forth, and to endeuour to be approoued as true plants. Away with thoſe filthie, rotten, and ſtinking workes of the fleſh, and walke in the fruits of the ſpirit. And now in the two next verſes the church maketh anſwere vnto her Spouſe.

In the former verſe (whereas the Lord had prayſed her to be ſo ſweet a Garden, ſo well watered, and of ſuch precious plants) ſhee aſcribeth all the praiſe thereof vnto him in theſe wordes, *O fountaine of the Gardens, O well of liuing waters, and the ſprings of Lebanon.* The vniuerſall Church is but one Garden, and all the particular Churches be gardens, ſo that her ſpeech and his doe not differ, when he calleth her a Garden, and ſhee calleth him the fountaine of the Gardens: when he calleth her a fountaine ſealed vp, which doth water all the plants, ſhe doth acknowledge the truth thereof vnto his praiſe, affirming, that he is the fountaine of the Gardens, that is, looke what liuely waters of life be in her, yea euen in all particular Churches, they flow from him, he is the fountaine. What need I here to rehearſe vnto you thoſe places of Scripture, which doe affirme, that in him is all fulneſſe, and that of his fulneſſe we doe receiue, that he is made vnto vs of God, wiſdome, righteouſnes, ſanctification, and redemption? The Bride doth acknowledge all

here

here in one word, when she calleth him the fountaine of the gardens. This is the praise and the glory, which all the faithfull do giue vnto Christ Iesus, not challenging any part of goodnesse to themselues. Then that shee calleth him a well of liuing waters and streames that flow out of Lebanon, or as it may be expounded, that they bee springs flowing, which do excell; those that flow from Lebanon, from whence as it is manifest by this place, did run all cleare springs of water: and liuing waters are those that alwaies doe flow as the springs, opposed vnto standing waters. Then the sense is this, that the graces and the waters of life, which do flow from Christ vpon his Church, are such as can neuer be dried vp, they flow from a bottomles fountaine, albeit he bestow his graces and gifts from time to time, in neuer so great measure, yet they bee not diminished. The Romish Church hath vtterly swarued from this, and seeketh vnto other Mediators to obtaine the things which appertaine vnto righteousnes, and saluation. They will not ascribe this glorie vnto him, that he is the fountaine of the gardens, and well of liuing waters, they bee not the Bride which here speaketh.

And now let vs come to the other part of her speech, which is expressed in the next verse, wherein shee maketh earnest prayer. *Arise O North winde, and come O South wind, blow vpon*

pon my Garden, that the ſpices thereof may flow out: let my welbeloued come to his Garden, and eate his pleaſant fruit. There bee two partes of this prayer: In the firſt ſhe craueth the inſpiration and gracious gifts of the holy Ghoſt, that the ſweete fruites in her may more abounde: In the ſecond part ſhee deſireth the preſence of Chriſt. I wil not ſtand curiouſly vpon the nature of theſe two contrarie windes, the North wind, and the South wind, but take that which is the principall, namely, that the holy Ghoſt is figured by the winds. For the North wind and the South wind, which blow vpon the trees, and which are felt of our bodily ſences, are not the winds which blow vpon the heauenly plants. It is an heauenly breathing which ſhe here requireth, euen the inſpiration of the ſpirit of grace, which is called the ſpirit of ſanctification, the ſpirit of adoption. Without this fruit there is no quickning, no life, no fruit in the Church, and therefore the faithfull doe rightly call for the North winde, and for the South wind to blow vpon them, that is, to bee inſpired with all graces and gifts of the holy Ghoſt, that ſo the ſweete ſauour of their fruits may flow forth: for according to the meaſure of the ſpirit which men haue receiued, ſo are their fruits. When the Lord did expreſſe the great and ſpeciall edification of his Church, hee laide by the Prophet Ioell, *I will powre forth of my*

my ſpirit vpon all flesh, which Saint Peter alleageth Acts 2. And when the Lord denounceth his iudgement, that the courſe of his Goſpell ſhould be ſtayed, which he giueth by the inſpiration of the holy Ghoſt. Saint *Iohn* ſeeth in a viſion foure Angels, holding the foure winds that they ſhold not blow, Reuel. 7. Well, the matter is this, all the true beliewers haue receiued the ſpirit of God, they are inſpired by the holy Ghoſt: but yet their faith, their hope, their charitie, their knowledge are not perfect. The fleſh is not wholy and fully mortified in them, the vertues which are called the fruits of the ſpirit, which are ſo ſweet and precious before the Lord, are not grown to their full perfection, and therfore being deſirous to bee more perfect, they crie out to haue the North wind and the South wind to blow vpon their garden, that is, to haue the inſpiration and heauenly breathing of the holy Ghoſt vpon their hearts, for there is the garden. And vnto this garden they deſire Chriſt to come, ſaying, *Let my Welbeloued come to his Garden.* Our deſire indeed ought to be continually, that wee may haue our hearts ſanctified, and purged by the operation of the holy Ghoſt, that ſo the Lord Ieſus may dwell in them. Doe you imagine that the heart of that man which is full of pride and vaine-glorie, of couetouſnes and ſelfe-loue, of fornication and vncleanneſſe, or ſuch like, is a garden for the Lord

Ieſus

Iesus to dwell in? No, no, the Diuell dwelleth in such gardens. Those stinking flowers delight his nose. Looke to it beloued, whether there grow sweet flowers, or stinking weeds in your hearts: for thereby you shall know whether they be the Gardens of Christ, or the gardens of the Diuell.

And now let vs come to the last verse of that which I read vnto you, which is the answere of Christ vnto her desire, that he would come to his garden. The Lord cannot denie the godly requestes of his chosen, and therefore hee saith: *I am come to my garden, my sister, my spouse, I gathered my Myrrhe with my spice, I eate my honeycombe with my honey, I dranke my wine with my milke, eate O friends, drinke, and make you merrie O welbeloued.* Behold here how Christ doth feast and banquet with his Church: her faith, her loue, and all the good fruits that spring from the same, are as Mirrhe and Spices, the hony combe and honey, wine and milke. This is plaine and easie to bee vnderstood. But how is this that hee willeth his friends to eate and be merry? Doth not the Church bring forth fruits only to Christ? Doubtles the Church doth bring forth her fruits only to Christ her Bridgrome, but yet the friends of the bridegrome, then the holy Angels and the faithfull Ministers of the word, haue ioy and reioycing and glory thereby. The Church cannot by her faith and good workes glorifie Christ, but

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the benefit thereof doth redound to the ioy and felicity of the Angels in heauen, and well may they be said to eate and drinke, and to be merry. This is cleare, and therefore I will not stand to shew what S. *Peter* speaketh of the desire which the Angels haue to behold the accomplishment of all things betweene Christ and his Church, 1. *Pet.* 1. Neither the triumphant ioy of those heauenly companies at the mariage day, *Reuel.* 19. *vers.* 7. Happie & blessed are all they which come to this banquet. The Lord bring vs vnto it for his mercies sake. Amen.

THE NINTH SERMON

CHAP V

1 *I sleepe, but mine heart waketh, it is the voice of my welbeloued that knocketh, open vnto me, my sister, my loue, my doue, my vndefiled: for my head is full of dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.*

2 *I haue put off my coat, how should I put it on? I haue washed my feete how shall I defile them?*

3 *My welbeloued put in his hand by the hole of the doore, and mine heart was affectioned towards him.*

4 *I rose vp to open to my welbeloued, and my hands did drop downe Myrrhe, and my fingers pure Myrrhe vpon the handles of the barre.*

5 *I opened to my welbeloued, but my welbeloued was gone and past: mine heart was gone when he did speake, I sought him, but I could not finde him, I called him, but he answered me not.*

6 *The Watchmen that went about the Citie found me, they smote me, and wounded me, the watchmen of the walls tooke away my vaile from me.*

WE had in the former Chapter almost nothing but the prayses and commendations which Christ giueth to his Church, so highly and with so many speeches doth hee magnifie and extoll her beautie and excellencie. Here in this Chapter wee haue another manner of Song, euen an accusing and a bewailing song: for here she accuseth her selfe, and bewaileth her great offence, her vnkindnesse and vndutifulnesse which she shewed towards her most kinde and louing Spouse, reporting also the great affliction and calamitie that light vpon her by that meanes. It is a strange thing that there should be such a suddaine alteration: but this is the state of the regenerate, euen now enflamed and rapt with a burning loue and zeale of

Christ: by and by all seemeth to be smothered and almost quenched. This is the battaile in them, betweene the flesh and the spirit; that is, from the imperfection, that is in all the Saints.

But let vs come to her words: *I sleepe* (sayth she) *but mine heart waketh.* Behold the holy virgine here falleth asleepe (for so shee sayth) but not (as wee may say) into a dead sleepe, for her heart is waking: shee doth but slumber as one that is halfe asleepe. We must consider here three thinges especially, what this sleepe is, whence it proceedeth, and what the effects thereof be. Touching the first, it were great follie for anie man to take it of the bodily or naturall sleepe, seeing the Church is to be considered altogether according to her spirituall and heauenly birth. It must needes then be a spirituall slumber, euen a drowsinesse in the heart and minde, touching heauenly things. This proceedeth from the remnants of the olde man in the godly. *The flesh* (sayth the holy Apostle) *lusteth against the Spirit, and the spirit is against the flesh, and these are contrarie the one to the other, so that ye cannot doe the things that you would*, Galath. 5. verse 17. When these concupiscences, these corrupt and worldly lustes wax strong, and doe seeme euen much to preuaile, then is there a damping of the spirituall graces, euen as it were a slumber that falleth

vpon

vpon the minde: I neede not ſtand vpon this. Now what effects doe follow, may eaſily be gathered: faith hath not the full and liuely operation, loue ſheweth not her heart, prayer waxeth feeble; the ioy and delight in all holy exerciſes is decayed, and ſo the practiſing of vertue is but ſlender. But here is not all: for the holy Scripture in ſundrie places calleth vpon vs to take heede that wee fall not into this ſleepe; but that we watch, ſhewing great danger that may enſue. *Be ſober and watch* (ſayth the Apoſtle) *for your aduerſarie the diuell goeth about like a roaring Lion, ſeeking whom he may deuoure*. When wee be aſleepe, the diuell ſteppeth in to leade vs vnto many ſinnes. And ſurely the regenerate in their ſleepe and ſecuritie doe commit and beare with much vanitie, and manie ſinnes they goe ſmoothly away withall. They are not in this ſleepe ſo much grieued as they ought to bee, when the name of God is diſhonoured. Yet here is one ſpeciall thing to be noted, that when ſhee was aſleepe, yet her heart was waking. What is that? Or what doth that ſhew vnto vs? It ſheweth plainely, that the true and liuely faith, and the ſpirit of ſanctification are neuer vtterly extinguiſhed. The worke of the new birth can neuer be quite put out: a moſt ſingular comfort. The faithfull doe fall oftentimes into great ſecuritie, negligent they are in performing holy

duties, yea they doe commit grieuous sinnes (as *Dauid* in his securitie did commit adulterie and murther) but yet the heart waketh, there remaineth somewhat within, the sleepe is not deadly: all faith, all loue, all zeale is not gone, howsoeuer the lusts of the flesh play their part for a time. This doth Saint *Iohn* plainely teach, saying, *Whosoeuer is borne of God, sinneth not, for his seede remaineth in him, neither can he sinne because he is borne of God*, 1. Iohn 3. verse 9. From hence it is, that when the Church sleepeth, her heart waketh, that the seede of God doth remaine in her. And from hence it is, that shee cannot loose the worke of sanctification, that shee is borne of God, who is immortall and vnchangeable. And as it is written, *Euery branch that beareth fruit he purgeth, that it may beare more fruit*, Iohn 15. *No fruitfull branch shall be cut off*. Then let them goe, which with the Papists would vphold and maintaine that wicked opinion, that the true iustifying faith and sanctifying spirit may bee had and vtterly lost. Well, thus hath the Bride in few words set forth into what estate she was fallen, and now she setteth foorth in the next place the great kindnesse and loue of her Spouse, who seeketh to awake, and to raise her out of this dangerous sleepe. *He knocketh, and he calleth, it is* (sayth shee) *the voice of my welbeloued that knocketh*. These speeches are vsed in other places

ces of the holy Scripture: for to the Church of the Laodicians, which was neither hot nor cold, the Lord Ieſus ſayth, *Behold I ſtand at the dore and knocke, if any man will heare my voice, and will open the dore, I will come in vnto him, and will ſuppe with him, and he with me*, Reuel. 3. verſe 19, 20. Alſo he calleth vpon the Church of Sardis to awake, to ſtrengthen the things that remaine, which are readie to die, Reuel. 3. verſe 2. This is the ſingular kindneſſe of our Lord to knock and call at the dore of our hearts, to waken vs when we are fallen aſleepe: he will not looſe his beloued, whom he hath bought ſo deere. This great kindneſſe of his doth the Bride here ſet foorth in theſe his ſpeeches: *Open vnto me, my ſiſter, my loue, my doue, my vndefiled, for my head is full of dew, and my lockes with the droppes of the night*. Firſt, hee that is the rich treaſure of all felicitie doth offer himſelfe to dwell in the heart, for hee doth knocke, and ſayth, *Open to mee*: what greater kindneſſe can be ſhewed? And moſt happie are they which doe open vnto him. What is all the whole ſound of the Goſpell, but a knocking and a calling of the Lord, to haue vs open the dore of our hearts to let him in? And marke well how the faithfull, euen in their ſleepe, can tell that it is the voice of Chriſt, when hee doth knocke and call. He ſayth, *My ſheepe heare my voice*, Iohn 10. Many ſay they cannot tell

which is the truth when they heare it, or which is the voice and doctrine of Christ, for how should they know? Or how should they be able to iudge? Doth not euerie sect of false teachers boldly and constantly affirme, that theirs is the doctrine of God? Such as doe speake thus, doe plainely confesse, that they be vtterly voide of Gods spirit, and of all grace, and that indeede they be not of his sheepe, which heare and know his voice: they be not of his Church, which euen in her sleepe doth know his voice. If the faithfull (as it is here manifest) doe heare and know the voice of Christ when they be asleepe, how much more when they be awake.

Then in the next place marke what kinde words he giueth to his Church, and what honour he doth vouchsafe her, for he calleth her *his sister, his loue, his doue, his vndefiled*. The Lord doth not flatter or faine, for hee is the truth it selfe, he hath freely layed all this dignitie and honour vpon her, and made her thus precious and deare vnto himselfe. In the next clause of his speech which shee reporteth, he doth perswade her to open vnto him for this cause, that hee hath vndergone so much for her sake, his head is wet with deaw, and his lockes with the droppes of the night. The similitude is drawne from hence, as if a louer should goe farre in the night, and endure much inconuenience to visit his

spouse

ſpouſe for her good. True it is, that the paines and ſorrowes which Chriſt hath vndergone for his ſpouſe, cannot be expreſſed. And now marke to what end ſhee reporteth here his kinde and louing ſpeeches, and the things which he did vndergoe and endure for her ſake. Surely ſhe doth by this deepely accuſe her ſelfe, and aggrauate her owne offence, euen bewayling it: for the greater his loue and kindneſſe is which hee doth vtter by his words, and the greater inconueniences he doth vndergoe for her ſake, the more hainous is her offence, the more grieuous is her breach of dutie, which ſhe openeth in the words that follow, when ſhee would not open vnto him. As if ſhe ſhould ſay: Ah wretch that I am, how great is my ſinne, that he being ſo exceeding kinde and louing vnto me, and enduring ſo hard thinges for my ſake, I ſhewed my ſelfe ſo vnkinde and ſo vndutifull vnto him? For beloued, wee muſt needes in all reaſon confeſſe this, that the greater the loue and kindneſſe of Chriſt is towards his Church, and the harder thinges he hath gone through for her ſake, the more haynous is her offence in ſetting to light thereby, and in ſhewing her ſelfe vnkinde and vndutifull towards him. And now marke how ſhee ſhewed her ſelfe vnkinde and vndutifull: for ſhe layeth open all the matter, and confeſſeth euen againſt her ſelfe how it was.

She was in the warme bed of securitie and carnall ease, shee is very loath for his sake to arise out of it, and therefore shee maketh these excuses, *I haue put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I haue washed my feete, how shall I defile them?* We may easily vnderstand these excuses according to a literall sence: and vnder these two are meant all the excuses which the flesh doth minister vnto the faithfull, when they be fallen into the spirituall sleepe, and are layed downe in the bed of securitie, to hold them from rising out of it at the calling of Christ. O they be a number of excuses which the flesh doth minister in such cases. Is it reason that I should so be diseased? shall I forgoe such and such pleasures and commodities? yea, shall I cast my selfe into so great inconuenience and danger? I thinke the Church was neuer in greater slumber and securitie than it is now here in this land: peace and wealth hath wrought it. And let euerie man enter into his owne conscience, and see what excuses the flesh doth minister to keepe him backe at the daily knocking and calling of Christ to open the heart vnto him, that there may be a sound profession of the Gospell. Is there not a feare of this or that inconuenience or harme that will follow? Are we not loth to take any paines, or to forgoe any vaine delights and pleasures? And is there not great colour of reason in all our excuses?

cuſes? And I pray you marke well, ſhe doth here make excuſes why ſhe could not ariſe to let him in, but yet ſhe did not forſake him, he is ſtill her welbeloued: for ſo ſhe ſaid, *it is the voice of my welbeloued.* How then? why ſhe knoweth him, ſhe heareth him, ſhe loueth him, but it is in ſuch a drowſie manner, as that ſhe will hold the world and him together. She will not caſt her ſelfe into perill, nor forſake the vaine delights of the fleſh for his ſake. Behold how ſtrong the remnants of ſinne be which remaine euen in the faithfull and deare children of God. Whither ſhould they fall, if the Lord ſhould let them alone? Doe they not euen refuſe to open the dore of their heart vnto Chriſt? Is not this a maruellous vnkindneſſe? And doth it not deſerue ſharp puniſhment? Surely we muſt needes looke for it: if not in generall ſcourges, yet in particular corrections and chaſtiſements vpon thoſe which do appertaine to the Lord, and whom he will rayſe out of their ſleepe.

Now let vs proceede vnto that which doth follow: *My welbeloued put in his hand by the hole of the dore, and mine heart was affectioned towards him.* The Church dealing ſo vnkindly, her Spouſe will now withdraw himſelfe after a ſort from her, but yet he will firſt leaue that behinde, that ſhall both rayſe her vp to ſeeke after him, and ſupport her in her afflictions. This is his mer-

mercie, he will not ſuffer her to continue in that ſleepe, which ſhee was fallen into, he will make her to ſee her offence, and repent for it, yea ſhe ſhall ſeeke him ſorrowing, and ſuffer great affliction, he withdrawing himſelfe after a ſort, that ſhee may take better heede to her ſelfe hereafter, and be more carefull of her owne good. That ſhe ſayth, *he put in his hand at the hole*, and our tranſlation addeth *of the dore*, it doth rightly indeede expreſſe the ſence. The ſimilitude is taken from hence, when a dore is locked, yet there is a key hole, and ſo here: when the hearts of the faithfull bee after a ſort locked vp, and Chriſt ſtandeth at the dore of the heart, and calleth and knocketh, yet they doe not open vnto him, but make excuſes, he doth finde ſome little creuice or hole, as through the dore, to put in his hand. This hand is the ſpirit of Chriſt, for hee doth by his ſpirit touch the very inward parts of her heart. And what followeth of that inward touch of his ſpirit? ſhe telleth you, when ſhe ſayth, *my heart was affectioned towards him*. The words are thus, my bowels were mooued towards him. Whereby is meant, that all the inward affections and powers of her minde are moued with repentance. Now ſhee is grieued, and diſpleaſed with her ſelfe, now ſhe lamenteth her owne follie, that ſhe was ſo vndutifull, now her heart is again rapt with loue of him, now ſhee will entertaine him.

Behold

Behold here the power of Gods ſpirit, what an alteration he maketh in men, how farre he changeth them from that which they were before, downe goeth the power of the fleſh where he commeth. An example of it you may ſee in the Apoſtles of Chriſt, how weake were they and fearefull at the time of Chriſts ſuffering, *Peter* himſelfe denieth his maiſter at the voice of a maid: but after the holy Ghoſt came downe vpon them, in the day of Pentecoſt, of a companie of weake and trembling lambes, they became ſo many mightie Lyons, they feared not the whole world. So is it with all the true children of the Church, they bee heauie and lumpiſh and dull when the fleſh hath a ſtroke, and beareth ſome ſway. Euerie ſmall thing is a let, and miniſtreth ſome excuſe to keepe them backe; and the excuſes ſeeme to be reaſonable. But when the touch of the holy ſpirit commeth, that Chriſt put in his hand at the hole of the dore, then there is a quickneſſe, a life and a mouing; then nothing can let but they will ſeeke Chriſt. It is then (beloued) a thing moſt neceſſarie, that we continually begge of the Lord, to giue vs his ſpirit: for wee cannot conceiue what a wonderfull change and alteration he will worke in vs. Hee putteth downe the fleſh, and raigneth with power. We remaine dull, ſlow, fearefull, weake, & negligent, becauſe wee reſt in our owne power very much,

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and doe not instantly and continually craue the gifts of the spirit. But will some man say, doth not Christ dwell alwaies in the hearts of the regenerate? And haue they not alwaies the spirit of sanctification? How then is it said, that Christ calleth and knocketh to haue them open vnto him, and to let him in, and they make excuses and refuse? Or how is it that he now toucheth them with his spirit, which they had before? This is easie to be answered: for wee must note, that there be degrees of the measure of graces and gifts of the holy Ghost. The Apostles had the holy Ghost, and did beleeue before Christs ascension; but not in that measure which afterward. So also the Lord Iesus dwelleth in all the faithfull, euen in those which haue but the least sparke of the true and liuely faith: but he knocketh to haue them open the dores of their hearts wider, and to receiue him in after a more full manner. *Lift vp your heads ye gates* (sayth the Prophet) *and be ye lift vp ye euerlasting dores, and the King of glorie shall come in*, Psal. 24. Wee must set the dores of our hearts wide open vnto Christ, that he may dwell and raigne in vs.

Let vs returne againe to the Spouse: behold what a working this hath in her, that Christ put in his hand. See what a mouing followeth vpon her repentance: for shee stayeth not in the bare motions of the minde (as many haue some touch

and

and some motions, but they vanish) but she ariseth to open the dore vnto her welbeloued: it is not now grieuous vnto her to put on her coat. O quickning spirit of grace, O happie touch with the finger of Christ! what should become of vs, what duties to our Lord God should wee performe without him? And now marke what followeth: *My hands* (sayth shee) *did drop downe Myrrhe, and my fingers pure Myrrhe vpon the handles of the barre*. In these words she magnifieth the graces of her welbeloued. She could touch nothing with her hands, nor lay her fingers vpon nothing where hee had put in his hand, but all did droppe with Myrrhe, euen with pure Myrrhe. For this is her meaning, that her welbeloued did but put in his hand, and yet hee had left euen by his touch such abundance of sweet graces, that whersoeuer shee toucheth, her hands droppe with the same. What a wonderfull sweet Sauior is this! And how happie are they whose hearts he doth thus touch! When this heauenly pure Myrrhe in such plentie is put into the heart, all the affections are moued. The soule cannot but bewaile her follie and vnkindnesse shewed to so sweet a Sauiour. There cannot but follow a loue, a zeale, and a care to performe all duties. The Lord extend this mercie towards vs, euen to put in his hand at the dore of our hard and dull hearts, to leaue there

this

this pure Myrrhe, that the handes and fingers of our soules may drop therewith, that so wee may bee mooued with greater and more earnest affection to seeke the Lord, then hetherto we haue. If hee let vs alone, whether will our flesh carrie vs? how deepe and dangerous will our sleepe bee that wee are fallen into? The fruites of the flesh which so grieuously breake forth, euen in the forwardest professors of the Gospell, doe manifestly bewray that we are fallen asleepe. The Lord hath called and doth continue calling and knocking at the doores of our hearts, but wee are full of excuses. Some are giuen to worldly delightes and pleasures. Others are set so vpon gathering and heaping vp riches, that they cannot open vnto Christ.

It followeth in the text, *I opened vnto my welbeloued: but my welbeloued was gone and past.* This is strange, that hee calleth and knocketh when shee was a sleepe and lay in her bed, and now when shee is risen out of her bed, and doth open the doore to let him in, he withdraweth himselfe and will not bee seene. Her vnkind dealing did deserue this. But doth this proceed from loue in him that hee doth withdraw himselfe. He hath iust cause to be displeased, and so to withdraw himselfe: but yet he doth it euen of purpose for her good, and that of a singular loue. But seeing Christ doth dwell alwaies in the faith-

faithfull, how can it be said that he doth withdraw himselfe out of their sight, especially when hee hath made their hands to drop with Myrrh? This is out of doubt that the Lord is sometimes present in the soules of the faithfull, and yet to their thinking hee seemeth to bee absent. Hee doth support them, and yet they haue not that liuely and comfortable feeling of his presence which they wish, and which sometimes they had. Then the heart is troubled, then they mourne, then they seeke and call after him: for she saith, *mine heart was gone when hee did speake, I sought him, but I could not finde him, I called him, but hee answered me not.* Alas now she is afraid that her vnkind dealing should cause him to forsake her. Now shee openeth the doores of her heart to let him in, shee seeketh him, and calleth after him, but hee will not be found. Who is able to expresse the griefe and sorrow that the godly soule hath, when there is a deepe remorse for sinne, and shee seeketh to feele the consolation of Christ, and he hideth himselfe from her? True it is that the soule could not repent, shee could not open the doore to receiue him in, shee could not so earnestly seeke and call after him, vnlesse he were present, and did worke these thinges in her. For all these thinges proceed from his grace: but yet he doth seeme to be absent. Let not this seeme strange, when as the glorious Godhead

vnited

vnited to the manhood in Christ, was not separated from the same, when he did hang vpon the crosse; but did as it were retaine, or not shew forth the power, that the same manhood might suffer the punishment that is due to sinne, and so make satisfaction, and yet he cried out, *My God my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Shall not we then take it in some sort that he forsaketh vs, euen when yet hee is present? But here againe it will be demaunded, how that which is spoken in this place, agreeth with the promise which is made, *Seeke and yee shall finde &c.* seeing here is no mention for all vehement calling after him that shee doth finde him, yea still shee goeth on, and it is not said that she found him. I answere, that here is indeed a most vehement seeking, and not said that she found him, but yet in the beginning of the next Chapter, she saith, *hee was gone downe into his garden.* Then she perceiueth at the last that he is present with her, and there indeed she glorieth of him. How commeth this to passe? Surely, he entreth in when the doore is opened, though she doth not perceiue it. This is the doctrine which I gather, which I would make plain vnto you: that when the faithfull soule is moued with earnest repentance, and doth seeke and crie after the Lord Iesus Christ, and seemeth not to find him, yet she doth find him. Christ doth not enter in so fully and at once that shee doth

per-

perceiue it, and yet in the end she findeth that he is come to his garden. She findeth that her rising out of her sleepe and from her bed, her opening the doore, seeking and calling after him, were not in vaine. This (beloued) ought greatly to encourage vs, that when wee seeke and cannot perceiue that we find not to giue ouer: for doubtles in the end, we shall wel perceiue that our seeking and our sorrowing after him had beene to good purpose. Many seeke, and because they find not euen according to their desire at the first, they faint and giue ouer: but wee must remember that Christ is very precious, and if with long and great seeking, wee find that we haue gotten euen some little hold for to retaine him with vs, it is much. To gaine but a little in heauenly things, euen with very great labour and trauaile, is much.

And now to the last verse which I did reade: *The Watchmen that went about the Citie found mee, they smote mee, and wounded mee: the Watchmen of the walles tooke away my vaile from mee.* Here now she reporteth what grieuous calamitie and affliction came vpon her. *The watchmen found her*, and what doe they? Her words bee plaine, that *they smote her, and wounded her, and tooke away her vaile.* For vnder these speeches she setteth forth a very great affliction that light vpon her, as it shall appeare, if we doe marke the cir-

circumstances well in all things. First, her conscience accuseth her how vnkindly she hath dealt towards Christ, who hath withdrawne himselfe worthily for the same. Then next her protector hiding away himselfe, what a feare is it to a tender virgin in the night to fall into the handes of rough and churlish fellowes? yea when they bee highly displeased with her, as it appeareth they are; for they beate her, and that grieuously, for they doe wound her. O what a crueltie is this? what sauage men are these? Yea, marke further who they be. They be the Watchmen, euen they that of all others should chiefly defend and comfort her, for the Watchmen are the shepheards, the Pastors and teachers. The Prophets of God doe complaine of the wicked Priests in the time of the Law, how they did afflict the godly. And how great are the calamities which the sincere professors of the Gospell haue suffered a long time, I may say many hundred yeares, at the hands of the proud Romish Prelates? what is the cause that they be so displeased? Surely because thee seeketh after Christ. They will beare with any disorder saying that they be proud, they be pompous, they be delicate, they be blind, euen like to the blind Pharasies. If any ryot, or excesse bee committed, these Watchmen hee good fellowes: but if any seeke Christ, that is intolerable, that is to their disgrace, vpon such a fall,

they

they beate and wound them. And as the Mother of all here complaineth, they take away her vaile. For Virgins to haue a vaile, it was for modestie and chastitie, and so it was an honour. They deface and dishonour her all that they can: for they will make as though shee were an harlot. They tearme them that seeke Christ, Heretikes, Schismatikes and fantasticall. They lay all the vile reproches vpon them which they can deuise. Let it not then trouble vs when it commeth to passe; that those which haue the Office and place to teach the Church, doe beate and wound, and disgrace her. Did not the builders refuse Christ himselfe the head corner stone? What maruaile then, though they beate his seruants? Thus much for this time.

THE TENTH SERMON

CHAP. V.

7 *I charge you, O daughters of Ierusalem, if you find my welbeloued: that you tell him that I am sicke of loue.*

8 *O fairest among women, what is thy welbeloued more then another welbeloued? what is thy*

welbeloued more then an other louer, that thou doſt ſo charge vs?

9 My welbeloued is white and ruddie, the chiefeſt of ten thouſand.

10 His head is as fine gold, his lockes curled and blacke as a rauen.

11 His eyes are like doues vpon the riuers of waters, which are waſht with milke, and remaine by the full veſſell.

12 His cheekes are as a bed of ſpices, and as ſweet flowers, and his lips like lillies dropping downe pure Mirrhe.

13 His hands like rinnges of gold ſet with the Chryſolite: his bellie like white Iuorie couered with Saphires.

14 His legs are as pillars of marble, ſet vpon ſockets of fine gold, his countenance as Lebanon, excellent as the Cedars.

15 His mouth is as ſweete thinges, and he is wholy delectable, this is my welbeloued, this is my louer, O daughters of Ieruſalem.

16 O thou faireſt among women, whether is thy welbeloued gone? whether is thy welbeloued turned aſide, that we may ſeeke him with thee.

17 My welbeloued is gone downe into his garden, to the beds of ſpices, that he may feede in the gardens and gather the lillies.

IN

IN the former part of this Chapter we haue ſeene how the Bridegrome calling and knocking to raiſe his Spouſe out of her ſleepe, euen from her carnall ſecuritie, what excuſes ſhe made, how vnkindly and how vndutifully ſhee dealt with him. Moreouer wee haue ſeene how hee for the ſame vnkindneſſe did hide himſelfe from her, ſhe ſeeketh after him, and falleth into hands of the Watchmen, euen into the hands of proud Prelates and falſe Paſtors, which dealt very cruelly with her, they did not kill her: for God will not ſuffer his Church to be rooted out. Nay you ſhall ſee, that they did not with all their rough tyrannie ſo much as once daũt or diſcourage her from ſeeking after Chriſt. They beate her, they wounded her, and tooke away her vaile, doth ſhe now ſhrinke for feare, or doth ſhe hide her head, and giue ouer ſeeking? No verily, ſhe goeth on in her ſearch, and is more vehement then before: when the fleſh had preuailed to caſt her into a ſleepe, thoſe ſeemed great and waightie reaſons to withholde her, *I haue put off my coate, and I haue waſhed my feete: For how* (ſaith ſhee) *ſhall I put it on? and how ſhall I defile them?* Chriſt ſeemeth to require that at her hands, which was without all reaſon, but after hee had touched her inwardly with his ſpirit ſhe ſaith not I haue ſought him, and by ſeeking

beene beaten, wounded and disgraced, how shall I seeke him any longer? There is now a fire kindled in her, which none can quench, the flesh now with all the excuses which it can make, is put downe. The faithfull doe neuer loue Christ, nor seeke after him with more burning zeale, then in time of hotte persecution. All experience hath taught this from time to time. And the practize of the Spouse doth here fully shew it. It was to this end and purpose that hee put in his hand at the hole of the doore, and left that sweet Myrrhe with which her fingers did drop. The truth is that in those times of calamitie, the Lord seemeth to hide himselfe away, and to be displeased for the sinnes of his people, yea, euen to be farre from them, but yet by that inward touch, by putting in his hand, he is very neare vnto them: he doth support & comfort them most mightily. Let vs therfore come to her words, out of which these things are to bee gathered. *I charge you O daughters of Ierusalem &c.* She doth here lay a straight charge againe vpon her companions: for her words are, I binde you with an oath, or I doe cause you to sweare. This sheweth great vehemencie, as it shall also appeare by their answere. Now for the matter of her charge, thus it standeth, *If you find my welbeloued what will you tell him that I am sicke of loue?* The manner of her speech that she saith, *What will you tell him?*

And

And then addeth, *That I am ſicke of loue*, doth ſhew a moſt vehement paſſion. For indeede the wordes are not ſo vttered as to ſay, If you finde my welbeloued, tell him, but what will you tell him? This demaunding the queſtion, ſheweth that her loue did ſo appeare, that they muſt needs if they will tell him any thing, tell him that ſhee is ſicke of loue. This is exceeding great loue, that ſhee commeth to bee loue-ſicke. If the fleſh had borne ſway, that would haue reaſoned after another ſort, as thus, I opened the doore, and hee withdrew himſelfe, and by that occaſion I haue ſuffered great calamitie, therefore I haue ſmall cauſe to loue him: ſeeing he doth hide himſelfe from mee, and cauſe me to bee thus ſtricken and wounded, why ſhould I ſet mine heart vpon him? The fleſh, I ſay, would miniſter ſuch kind of reaſons: but the faithfull are not led by the wiſedome of the fleſh, but by the heauenly ſpirit which teacheth them the more they ſuffer for Chriſt, the more to loue him. This is a thing paſſing all humane reaſon, that the bride hauing fallen into ſo great affliction by ſeeking after her bridegrome, is thereupon ſicke of loue. The faithfull indeede reioyce in afflictions, it is an honour vnto them to ſuffer for Chriſt, and the more they ſuffer for his ſake, he doth ſo ſtrengthen them, & ſo worke in them, that the more they loue him. There is more zeale and more earneſt prayer to

God, among the faithfull, in the times of affliction and perſecution, then in the time of proſperitie and worldly peace, for then commonly men doe grow ſecure. Thus hauing heard what the ſpouſe ſaith to the daughters of Ieruſalem, let vs now ſee what anſwere they doe make. *O thou faireſt among women, what is thy welbeloued more then another welbeloued, what is thy welbeloued more then another louer, that thou doeſt ſo charge vs?* Firſt of all we may obſerue here, that theſe daughters of Ieruſalem doe behold and acknowledge a great beautie in the Spouſe, that they call her the faireſt among women. Such as be goodly to behold, if they fall into affliction, that maketh them to ſeeme baſe and contemptible. The Church then being beaten and wounded by the watchmen, and her vaile taken from her, being I ſay thus diſhonoured and diſgraced, what beautie could they behold in her? Afflictions doe make baſe and contemptible to the outward ſhew: but the beautie of the Church is not outward in the things of this life, but in ſpirituall ornaments, which are not diminiſhed or dimmed by afflictions, but doe then indeed ſhine brighteſt of all. For in the times of the greateſt perſecution when the godly are impriſoned, racked, and tormented, you ſhall behold their ſtedfaſt faith, their feruent zeale, their patience, their contempt of this world with many other vertues:

for

for which the daughters of Ieruſalem, euen the weaker ſort which are not as yet fully come to Chriſt, doe commend the Spouſe to be the faireſt among women. Doubtles the very tyrants and perſecutors themſelues, are ſometimes conſtrained to wonder at the glorie of the faith and patience of the Martyrs.

Then in the next place wee may note, how theſe daughters of Ieruſalem, do as it were wonder why ſhe is ſo earneſt in ſeeking her welbeloued, that ſhee doth ſo charge them with an oath, to tell them that ſhe is ſick of loue: and hereupon they enquire and aske her what there is in him more then in another welbeloued. For if there be not an excellencie in him aboue all other, why ſhould ſhe be ſo vehement in ſeeking him? We do account it a vanitie to be vehement in ſeeking that which is little worth. Here is a very ſpeciall thing to be obſerued: and that is, that the earneſt ſeeking of the faithfull after Chriſt, is a meane to ſtirre vp others to enquire what hee is, or what there is in him. Reaſon doth leade men thus farre. when they ſee that no threatnings, no bonds, no tortures nor ſuffrings can preuaile, but that the faithfull doe become more earneſt in ſeeking Chriſt, to ſay within themſelues, out of all doubt there is ſome great thing that carrieth theſe men it is no ſmall benefit for which they will endure all theſe things. Hereupon they begin to enquire what

what Christ is: *What is thy welbeloued* (say they) *more then another welbeloued, O thou fairest among women, what is thy welbeloued more then another louer, that thou doest so charge vs?* Here is one great step towards eternall life, when men doe begin to enquire after the Lord Iesus Christ and are desirous to know what his benefites and graces bee. Where wee may note what a good thing it is to bee zealous and earnest in the profession of the Gospell, and in seeking the Lord Iesus Christ. O it winneth soules: for it causeth such as had little regard, to enter into the consideration what Christ is, when they see that others be so earnestly bent, and cannot bee driuen backe by no meanes from seeking after him. And when there is a coldnesse, especially in the Ministers of the Gospell, so that they seeke more earnestly after the thinges of this life then they doe to set vp the Kingdome of God, doth it not as it were beate into the heads of the ignorant and simpler sort, that the Gospell is a thing of no very great price? for if it were worth the while, if it should bring such felicitie, would not the teachers themselues set more by it, then by the transitorie things of this life? What is this but to lay stumbling blockes before the lame, and so cause the blind to goe out of their way, which thing God doth accurse in the law? Woe be to them therefore, who ought to be the most zealous of

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all others in forſaking this world, and ſeeking after Chriſt, that by their zeale they might ſtirre vp ſuch as know not the Lord, to enquire what the matter is about which they bee ſo hot and vehement: and they bee ſo cold that way, and ſo ſtudious for this world, that they driue them backe. Beloued, know this alſo, that whoſoeuer he be, though meane in the world, that in ſimplicitie and ſinglenes of heart, with earneſt zeale ioyned with meekneſſe, doth ſeeke the Lord, he ſhall be a meane, yea euen an happie inſtrument to winne others.

Let vs proceede: The daughters of Ieruſalem demaund, *What is thy welbeloued more then an other welbeloued?* And hereupon ſhee deſcribeth him vnto them. Firſt before we enter into the examination of the particulars, wee may conſider in generall how that ſhee ſetteth forth here the riches, the dignitie, the glorie and beautie of Chriſt. This is the office of the Church, to publiſh Chriſt crucified. And now moſt willingly ſhe doth it, when the daughters of Ieruſalem are ſo inquiſitiue for to know him. Shee deſcribeth him at large, to the end that it may appeare there is good cauſe to moue her ſo earneſtly to ſeeke him, and that it may be known what a rich iewel they obtaine that doe find him. Moreouer, doe you not ſee heere that it is not perſecution that can ſtop the mouth of the Church, or make her

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keepe silence but shee will publish and lay open the glorie and the praise of her welbeloued. O how the cruell enemies doe storme, how they gnash their teeth, how they fret and rage? when the sincere and holy doctrine of Christ is published, which doth lay open the rich treasures of his grace, that in him there is all fulnes of good things to make men happie; and yet for all their furie, the faithfull seruants of the Lord will not be silent, but describe him and paint him forth. True it is when Christ is earnestly sought, and when his graces are throughly laid open, it doth displease proud Heretikes, which stand to maintaine their owne doctrine and wicked errors. Also the glosing Hypocrites which boast of their owne merits, and glory in themselues, cannot abide it. Yea such as haue made their belly their God, that mind earthly things, are angry, because it is a great rebuke vnto them, that Christ being so excellent, they preferre the world before him. They would faine seeme good, being altogether worldly: and when it is made manifest that they make a blind and a wicked choice, in setting so much by the world, and so little by Christ, it doth disgrace them. But howsoeuer they doe take it, the holy Church describeth Christ. And in the first place shee speaketh of his colour and complexion, saying *My welbeloued is white and ruddie.* These two colours together doe shew a right

right excellent conſtitution of bodie, and alſo a very perfect beautie. The Lord is goodly and glorious, he is ſtrong, and ſhall remaine for euer in perfect health. Yea he is ſo excellent, that ſhe ſaith, *he is the chiefe of ten thouſand* Or as the very words are, *he is the ſtandard bearer of ten thouſand.* He doth indeede very farre excell all creatures whatſoeuer, euen men and Angels: and therefore ſhe ſaith, *he is euen as the ſtandard bearer of ten thouſand.*

Then comming to the ſeuerall parts, ſhe ſaith, that *his head is as fine gold.* Two names of gold indeede are here vſed: the firſt of them ſignifying fine gold: the other, gold that is purified. Hereby ſhe ſetteth forth how excellent, how glorious, how rich and ſhining the head of Chriſt is. For among earthly thinges, what is comparable to the fine gold? If there be a purpoſe to ſignifie ſomewhat by euery part of the body, then by the head of Chriſt wee may vnderſtand the deitie. *I would haue you to know* (ſaith S. Paul) *that Chriſt is the head of euery man, that the man is the head of the woman, and that God is the head of Chriſt.* 1. Cor. 11. verſ. 3. But I doe not hold it neceſſarie to interpret euery part, as ſignifying ſomewhat, but onely this, that the Spouſe deſcribing Chriſt, maketh her deſcription according to the parts of the naturall bodie of man, to the end that it may bee knowne that hee is wholly and altogether beautifull

beautiful, delectable, & precious. It was accoũted beautifull in a young man to haue blacke haire, and therefore she sayth, *his lockes are curled and blacke as a Rauen.* But what? shall we take it that here is any allowance of that ruffian like wearing of long haire which is vsed in these daies? No verily; for the Nazarites, which according to the law of God did weare long haire, did weare it after a most graue and sober manner.

In the next place she doth praise his eyes, saying, *His eyes are as Doues vpon the riuers of waters:* Or thus more plainely, *His eyes are as the eyes of Doues, which are beside the riuers of waters.* The eye of the Doue (as it hath been said before) is a beautiful eye, chast, and single. To the doues eyes therfore she likeneth the eyes of her spouse. And to set out a further cleareneſſe and beautie in them, here is mention of those Doues, which are by the riuers of cleare waters, as the Doues do delight. Then further she saith, *they bewashed with milke* (this is for a further brightneſſe) *and remaine* (as our translation saith) *by the full vessels.* There is no speech of vessels in the Hebrew text: but thus the words doe stand, *they remaine vpon the fulneſſe.* And here we must know, that the word which he vseth, which may be called *fulneſſe*, signifieth the hollow place, in which a precious stone is set, for the precious stones set vpon rings, or in rowes vpon the Ephod, had

their

their hollow places in which they were cunningly set, & so were called stones of fulnesse, because they did in so fit sort fill their hollow places. Vnto this she likeneth the eyes of her spouse, saying, *that they remaine vpon the fulnesse*, that is, they do like precious stones that are set most cunningly, fill their hollow places. This is a speciall commendation of the eyes in man or woman. For if the eyes doe stand foorth too much, it is a deformitie, as wee vse to say, goggle eyed, & likewise if they be sunke in so deepe, that they be then, as we vse to tearme them, hollow eyed. The Bridegroome is neither of these, his pure eyes are as precious stones that are fitly set in their places.

It followeth, *His cheekes are like a bed of spices, and as sweet flowers.* Touching the later clause, the word is translated *flowers*, doth vsually signifie towers; but it hath been taken here for flowers that grow vp in the beds of spices. If wee should expound the wordes then after the vsuall signification, we should say, as the towers of those which make sweete ointments: but wee may more fitly take them to be the growen plants of those that deale with spices and sweet ointments, seeing the proper signification of the word is of greatnesse.

His lippes are like Lillies, dropping downe pure Myrrhe. The Lillies are faire and sweet of themselues, vnto these she compareth his lips, adding more-

moreouer that they drop pure myrrhe? This is to bee referred vnto that holy and heauenly word, which proceedeth out of his mouth. In the commendation of his Church, Christ said, that *her lips did droppe as the hony combe*, and now hee saith, *that his lips doe drop pure Myrrhe*. It is the same word which proceedeth from the mouth of either of them, but not after the same manner: for it hath proceeded from him as from the author thereof, it is his owne, it hath the high and soueraigne authoritie from him. The Church doth vtter it not as her owne, but as hauing receiued it from him. True it is, that his lips doe drop pure Myrrh only to his Spouse: for the reprobate doe cause by their obstinacy, that this word *which commeth out of his mouth, is vnto them as a sharp sword, by which they are slaine: yea it is a fire that doth burne them vp, it doth vex and torment them*. *Reuel.* 11. Looke therefore vnto thy selfe, if the word of the Lord bee sweete and precious vnto thee, euen as the pure Myrrhe: if thou take thy ioy and solace in it, as the Prophet reporteth of himselfe in Psal. 119. then art thou a child of the Church. The light and power of the heauenly word doth dwell in thee, and thou doest obey it. But if it bee bitter vnto thee because it discloseth the foule wickednesse of thy heart, if it torment thee, that thou canst not abide to heare it, but as it is written, thou fliest to the

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Prophets, *Prophecie vnto vs pleſant things*, then wofull is thine eſtate, for thou loueſt darkneſſe more then light becauſe thy workes be euill. It is a neceſſary thing that euery one looke well into this matter.

The next is that ſhee ſaith, *His hands are like rings of gold, ſet with Chryſolite.* It may bee thus taken, that vpon hands are rings of gold, ſet with Chryſolite. The manner hath ben and is to weare rings of gold, which are ſet with goodly precious ſtones. The difference is not great whether way wee take it, either that his handes are like thoſe rings of gold, or that they bee ſo adorned with them. This is the ſenſe, that al is rich and ſhining. The like ſenſe there is in the next words: *His belly is like white Iuorie, couered with Saphires*: for theſe things are beautifull and precious.

It followeth, *His legs are as pillars of Marble ſet vpon ſockets of fine gold, his countenance as Lebanon, excellent as the Cedars.* Here is a fit repreſentation of his legs, by pillars of Marble, and ſet vpon ſockets of fine gold and of his ſtature, that he is to looke vpon, as the Cedars of Lebanon. For I doe take it manifeſt, that the countenace is to bee referred to his whole ſtature. For it is as it ſhould bee ſaid, looke vpon him and hee is of ſtature goodly and tall, euen like vnto the high Cedars of Lebanon. His mouth is as ſweete thinges, and hee is wholy delectable.

Verie well may wee take the wordes thus, the roofe of his mouth is moſt ſweet. As if we ſhould ſay, there commeth nothing out of his mouth, but that which is ſweete. Yea ſhe will not ſtand to proſecute euery part, but addeth a generall commendation that hee is wholy delectable, or moſt to be deſired. From top to toe, hee is glorious and excellent. Wherefore hauing thus deſcribed him, ſhe concludeth with an exclamation, *This is my beloued, and this is my Louer O daughters of Ieruſalem.* Hauing ſuch a Louer as this whom ſhe hath deſcribed, hath ſhe not good cauſe to ſeeke after him, yea euen to bee ſicke of loue for him? This glory, theſe riches, this ſweetneſſe of Chriſt is hidden from the world, and this is the reaſon why men doe not long after him. Moſt admirable it is, that ſuch treaſures of eternall life and happineſſe are propounded in the Goſpell, and the ſame ſo highly eſteemed. But doubtleſſe men cannot eſteeme that they ſee not. *The God of this world* (ſaith Saint Paul) *hath blinded the mindes of the infidels, leaſt the light of the Goſpell of the glorie of Chriſt ſhould ſhine vnto them, who is the image of God.* 2. Cor. 4. verſe. 4. The Goſpell doth ſhine moſt cleare and bright; the Church as we ſee here, publiſheth and painteth out Chriſt Ieſus to be moſt precious, but the Diuel is ſo great a Lord in the world, hee hath ſuch power, hee beareth ſuch ſway, and worketh with

with such efficacie in the hearts of men, that very few doe behold the light, very few are brought thus farre, as to imbrace the saving health of the Lord. O how wretched is the state of mankinde, that, such a redeemer being published, cannot be brought to imbrace him. But the Spouse doth well, she goeth on in performing her Office: she doth not onely seeke after him, euen sicke with loue, and will not with any crueltie be dismayed, but also publisheth and proclaimeth openly what manner of one hee is: shee describeth his riches and his glorie, euen to this end, that such as doe not yet know him, may bee moued to seeke him, and to enioy his benefits.

Now whereas shee hath thus described her welbeloued, let us see what effect it worketh, for this appeareth by the next words which be these: *Whither is thy welbeloued gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy welbeloued turned aside, that we may seeke him with thee?* The daughters of Ierusalem hearing that hee is so goodly a person, are stirred vp and inflamed with a desire to seeke him, thus the effect which her speech in commendation of Christ wrought. And this is a singular effect, and such as indeede is to bee reckoned among the chiefe actions vnder heauen that are wrought by men. For if wee doe regard it first in respect of the Lord, what a worthie thing is it to spread the glorie of Christ?

And then if wee respect men, what a worke of charitie is it to draw men into the way of Saluation? Here may the Ministers of the Gospell learne what their chiefe dutie is: for that which doth draw men chiefly to loue, and to seeke after Christ, that is their chiefe work, there are they to imploye all their chiefe force. And you may see here that it is the describing of Christ, euen the opening and displaying of the rich treasures and graces which be in him, that draweth men to seeke him. Who will seeke that which he knoweth not? And who will not seeke after a precious iewell? Behold therefore how the holy Apostles euen Paul and the rest, doe paint out Christ crucified? They doe lay open in him that wee shall find a remedie for all our miseries. Then are all true pastors and teachers to be plentyous in publishing, and manifesting the graces and heauenly blessings that be in the Lord Iesus. For so shall they draw men effectually to long after him, and to seeke him. Here is a description made by the Spouse, as we haue seene, but al vnder an Allegorie, for that is according to the whole course of this Song. Let the Ministers of God lay open all things as plainely as may be: for that shall comfort the hearts of the simple. Let them declare how *that hee is made vnto vs of God, Wisedome, righteousnes, sanctification and redemption*, 1. Cor. 1. *Let them open how hee was made the curse, to*

deliuer

deliuer vs from the curse of the Law, Galat.3. Yea how hee made him sinne for vs, that knew no sinne, that we in him might be made the righteousnes of God, 2. Cor.5. For these thinges being laid open, men will couet with the Apostle, Philip.3. to bee found in him, euen as wee see how these daughters of Ierusalem doe now earnestly enquire whither he is gone, that they may seeke him. And marke well how they say not simply that we may seeke him, but, that wee may seeke him with thee. This is the right way to seek him indeede, this is the only way to find him, when any doe seeke Christ with the Church. You haue many heretikes and schismatikes, which hauing come to some knowledge of Christ, grow into a pride and disdaine to seek him with the Church, scatter, and will needs seeke him by themselues. But heere is their reward: they finde the diuell, they finde not Christ. Let vs learne heere to enquire for him of the Spouse, and to seek him with her: for so it is said, that we may seeke him with thee.

And see now what followeth, for the Church maketh answer, and telleth them where they shal seeke him. Her words are the beginning of the next chapter, but more rightly they are to be added to this Chapter. Thus they bee, *My welbeloued is gone down into his garden to the bed of spices, that hee may feed in the gardens, and gather the*

lillies. I am my welbeloueds, and my welbeloued is mine, who feedeth among the lillies. Here we may obserue diuers points; as first that shee telleth them Christ is in his garden, among the sweete Spices and delectable flowers, that is to say, he is in his Church. If they will find him, there hee is to be found, and not any where else. secondly, it is apparant, that although Christ doe after a sort withdrawe himselfe, so that the Church in great affliction doth seeke him forrowing, yet she knoweth that hee is with her. The faithfull doe feele Christ present, but they doe not feele him in that measure which they doe wish. If it were not so, how could the spouse so crie out after him in seeking & yet tel them that he is in his garden. Here is the consolation of the faithful, that howsoeuer the Lord doth seeme to withdraw and hide away himselfe from them for a time, yet they bee sure hee cannot forsake his Church, and they shall find him. And for this cause yee see how she glorieth in the next words, of that communion that is betweene her and Christ, *I am* (saith shee) *my welbeloueds, and hee is mine, that feedeth among the lillies.* If she be his, if she wholy deuote her selfe to liue vnto him, and to set forth his glory; (for the faithful are so to be consecrated vnto him in soule and bodie, as to liue vnto him,) and on the other side, if he with all his riches and glory bee hers, as with assurance of

such the doth glorie, then how can it bee but she shall find him? Yea she hath found him, for the Lord doth enter into all that open vnto him: albeit in their calamities he seemeth to hide himself. O what a treasure hath that soule, which with a true and lively faith can say, I am the Lords, and the Lord is mine, hee feedeth among the lillies, hee will feed me with all sweete things! Let vs make it our whole studie to come to this: for he that hath Christ hath all.

THE ELEVENTH SERMON.

CHAP. VI.

1 *Thou art faire my love, as Tirzal, comely as Ierusalem, terrible as an Armie with banners.*

2 *Turne away thine eyes from me, for they ouercome me: thine haire is like a flocke of Goates which lande downe from Gilead.*

3 *Thy teeth are like a flocke of sheepe, which goe vp from the washing, whereby euery one bring out twins, and none is barren among them.*

4 *Thy temples are within thy locks, as a piece of a Pomegranate.*

5 *There are threescore Queenes, and fourescore concubines, & of the damsels no number.*

6 *But my doue is alone, and my vndefiled, she is the only daughter of her Mother, and she is deare to her that bare her: the daughters haue seene her, and counted her blessed, euen the Queenes and the Concubines, and they haue praised her.*

7 *Who is shee that looketh forth as the Morning, faire as the Moone, pure as the Sunne, terrible as an Armie with banners?*

8 *I went downe to the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valley, to see the vine budded, and of the Pomegranates flourished.*

9 *I knew not thing, my soule set me at the chariots of my noble people.*

10 *Returne, returne, O Shulamite: returne returne, that we may behold thee. What shall you see in the Shulamite, but as the companie of an Armie?*

IN this Chapter, and also the next, the Lord Iesus doth giue very great and singular commendations vnto his deare spouse, testifying his loue and hearty affection towardes her. Hauing praised her greatly in the fourth Chapter, it may be demanded, why hee doth it againe after the same manner, and in diuers things with the same words. Indeed this may bee demaunded, least we might imagine that here were a tedious and a need-

needlesse repetition. The truth is, that this commendation is not superfluous, but commeth very fitly for the consolation of the Spouse. For you haue seene in the beginning of the former Chapter, what a fault shee committed, how vnkindly she dealt with Christ, how he, as displeased, withdrew himselfe, so that she fell into great affliction. Shee hath bewailed her offence, shee hath sought after him sorrowing, and now least it might seeme that shee had by her sinne lost that her former beautie and commendation, yea least there might seeme to remaine some blot, or that his former liking were diminished, he doth giue her the same, or rather greater commendation then before. This in generall is the cause why the Lord doth againe commend his Church. And here we behold the great kindnesse of the Lord Iesus Christ, who doth quite forget all offences committed against him, as if they had neuer beene. He doth not so much as once vpbraid his spouse with her vnkind dealing, doubtlesse the faithfull hauing felt and tasted how sweete the Lord is, being made partakers of his great benefits, when they bee ouertaken with the flesh, and doe fall into vndutifulnesse towardes Christ, are much dismayed, fearing that now they cannot be beautifull and deare in his sight. Now they haue deformed themselues, how should he loue them? Here is therefore a speciall comfort ministred, that

that they hauing lamented and bewailed their offences, seeking after him with an earnest desire trauelling and heauie loaden, hee doth refresh them, he doth imbrace them, he doth loue them, he doth commend them, and delight in them, euen as if they had neuer delt euill towardes him. What a sweet Lord is this! What a gracious redeemer haue we! Can any tongue expresse the riches of his grace? Or who is able any way to set forth the bountifulnesse of this Lord? This ought not to encourage vs to doe euill, that he quite forgetteth all our offences, as if they had neuer been done, when we repent and turne vnto him bewayling our transgressions, and thirsting for his grace: for shall his kindnesse increase our vnkindnes? Shall his loue cause vs to hate him? Shall his welldoing towards vs bee an occasion that we should dishonour him? For what else doe all they that are emboldened to sinne, but dishonour him, hate him, and shew vnkindnes vnto him? Nay his exceeding loue and kindnes must worke another effect in vs, and that is to loue him with a vehement loue: for doth not loue require loue againe, and is not kindnesse to bee rendered vnto kindnesse? Take hold of this, beloued; let it not depart away from you, the Lord is kinde and mercifull, he is bounteous and long suffering, he doth receiue poore sinners that repent, therfore let vs with our whole heart loue

him

him, let vs honor and obey him. Let it not come neare vs, that his goodnes should make vs naught. I speake it, because there bee many, who when they heare that Christ is so readie to forgiue, doe euen boldly commit all manner of wickednesse: for they hope of pardon. This is a most vile thing, a thing abhominable, for they doe abuse the graces of God, to their greater condemnation: for the holy Apostle vrging and requiring that men which professe Christ, should adorn the doctrine of God our Sauiour, by their godly deedes, addeth this golden sentence: saying, *For the grace of God hath appeared, whichbringeth salvation vnto all men, teaching vs, that denying vngodlinesse and worldly lusts, we should liue soberly and iustly, and godly in this present world*: Tit. 2. vers. 11. 12. If the grace of God hath appeared to this end, how far be they out of the right way, which take occasion thereby to continue in sinne? But let vs omit these and come to the wordes of our text.

Thou art faire my loue as Tirza, comely as Ierusalem, terrible as an Armie with banners. These were two goodly Cities, Tirza, and Ierusalem, and vnto these for beautie and comelinesse, the bridegroome doth compare his loue. And in the next clause he commendeth her terrible fortitude in battell. In the first Chapter he doth likewise her to the troupe of horses in the Chariots of Pha-

raoh.

zach. Shee is strong and prompt to the battaile. And here commending her for the same thing, he saith, *that shee is terrible as an Armie with banners.* But vnto whom is her fortitude and valour thus terrible? Surely, euen vnto all her foes, but especially vnto the Infernall powers, for hauing put on the whole armour of God, she standeth in the spirituall battaile, she resisteth and putteth diuels to flight. Thus we see, why he saith she is terrible as an Armie with banners. An armie that is strong and marcheth with banners or Ensignes, is very terrible to their aduersaries to behold: euen so is the Spouse vnto the whole Armies of diuels: But here we must obserue, that the faithfull soule hath not this force of her selfe, but is strong and terrible in the mightie power of God. And Saint Paul teacheth, that *wee stand in that inuincible power of his, by putting on the whole armour of God.* Ephes. 6. The Church of Rome hath turned all this into an outward shew, yea euen into a ridiculous mockery. For whereas the true Church militant goeth thus armed to the battaile, and is indeed, through the mightie power of God, terrible euen as an armie with banners: they take away the word of God, and so depriue them of all the whole armour of God, and in stead thereof go marching in procession with great high banners vpon poles, as if the diuell were to be fought against, or feared with such a shew.

Then

Then it is added in the Text: *Turne away thine eyes from me, for they ouercome me.* In the fourth chapter he vſed an other ſpeach, but to the ſame effect: for when hee ſaid, that ſhee pluckt away his heart with one of her eies, or that ſhee had with the beautie, ſimplicitie and chaſtitie of her eyes euen wonne his heart, it expreſſeth a moſt vehement affection of loue towards her. Euen ſo in this place the beautie of her eyes doth affect him in maruelous maner. The ſenſe is very plain; but the phraſe of ſpeach is not ſo plain: & therefore taken diuers waies. For ſome do take it that he doth not ſay, turne away thine eies from mee, but turne thine eyes towardes mee. For Chriſt doth not meane that the Church ſhould turne the eyes of her faith from him. And then the other clauſe they do expound thus, that they may lift me vp, that is, with conſolation. This doth highly commend the glorious beautie of faith: and moſt true it is, as Chriſt ſaid before: *My doue that dwelleſt in the clefts of the rocke, in my hollow place of the ſtaires, ſhew mee thy face, make me to heare thy voice, &c.* So heere it is not his meaning, but that ſhe ſhould turne her eyes towards him, and not turne them away from him: but yet ſurely (as I take it) the words are to be tranſlated thus, *Turne thy eies from me for they ouercome me.* It is a kinde of ſpeech that doeth in the higheſt ſort that can be, expreſſe how much the beautie

beautie of her eyes doth delight him. For euen as she said she was sicke of loue, so he saith that he is, as it were ouercome with loue. Doubtlesse there is not any way to expresse a greater liking. Is the beautie then and the glory of faith (for that is the eye, or rather the eyes of the soule) so excellent in the eyes of the Lord, and shall not wee labour to obtaine so precious a gift? O beloued, the more stedfastly wee trust in the Lord, the more acceptable it is vnto him, the more we doe glorifie him. Did he not euen wonder at the faith of the Cananitish woman saying: *O woman great is thy faith, be it vnto thee euen as thou desirest?* Mat. 15. And also Iesus marueiled at the faith of the Centurion, Luke 7. Let vs not hearken to the blasphemous voice of the Papists, which affirme that it is arrogancie and wicked presumption for men to assure themselues of the fauour of Christ: and that it is humilitie to be alwaies in doubt. Indeede because their faith is repoſed in their owne workes and merits, they may right well stand in doubt: but all that rest in the promises of God, euen in his free mercie in Christ, what cause is there that they should doubt? Is God vntrue of his promise? Yea all they which will not beleeue, but doubt, doe make God a lier, 1. Iohn 5. which is blasphemous.

It followeth: *Thine haire is like a flocke of Goates, which look down from Mount Gilead. Thy teeth*

teeth are like a flocke of sheepe, which goe vp from the washing, which euerie one bring out twinnes, and none is barren among them. Thy temples are within thy lockes as a peice of a Pomegranate. I ioyne all these together, because we had them before in chap. 4. and in the very same wordes, only one word excepted, and that is, that he likeneth her teeth heere, as the word is in this place, to a flocke of ewes: and in chap. 4. hee calleth them a flocke of equall bignes, or as it were out of equal stature and proportion. I neede not stand here again in exposition, but onely thus much, the Lord will haue his church to know, that vpon her repentance, her fault is forgotten, he doth not, nor will not so much as once vpbraid her therewith. This kindnes of our Lord ought we to imitate, which is no easie thing vnto flesh and bloud. For let a man shew vnkindnesse and doe iniurie vnto men, they will not forget it very readily: they will quickly vpbraid, and cast each other in the teeth. Therefore here is a great vertue to be imitated.

In the words that follow, there is yet further and a more ample declaration of the glorious beautie and rich decking of the Church. The first part of the wordes are thus. *There are threescore Queenes, and fourescore Concubines, and Virgins without number.* Wee reade that King Salomon had seuenhundred Queenes, and three hundred Concubines, 1. King. 11. 3. If these be the wiues

and Concubines of Salomon, which are heere mentioned, then he wrote this song before hee did come to haue that former excessiue number. But it seemeth to mee that he doth not speake of Salomons Queenes and Concubines, but as if hee should say, let there be threescore Queenes, and fourescore Concubines, and Virgins without number. Or thus, howsoeuer it be that there be many Queenes, and many Concubines, with an infinite number of Virgins. Queenes are of great dignitie, they be attired with costly things. And the Kinges in olde time had also beside their Queenes, Concubines; these were beautiful and in rich attire, according to the glorie of Princes. Then also the Queenes (as it is the manner) had their maidens of honor to attend vpon them, and likewise Virgins did wait vpon the Concubines, so that here is a very great number of beautifull Damsels, which are also in goodly attire. Then in a word, to come to the matter, thus it is, if the Lord should say, set all the goodly Queenes and Concubines of the great Kings and Princes of the world, with all the companie of their Virgins together, it is a goodly shew, there is glorie, beauty and riches: but yet they are nothing comparable to my loue, her beautie and glorie farre excelleth them all. For you see how hee addeth in the next verse, *but my doue is alone*. How is she alone? she is alone, or she is onely beautiful, rich,

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and honourable. The birth, or the honour touching the parentage of Queenes, the beauty and decking of Concubines and virgins, is great and highly esteemed in the eyes of the world: but it is not comparable to the honor, beautie, and rich ornaments of my doue, of my vndefiled, she standeth alone in all excellencie. All these Queenes and goodly women come not nigh her in any thing, she is without peere. For let vs consider euerie particular. It is a thing of great account in the world to bee the daughters of mightie Princes, to be the wiues and concubines of Kings: but what is the dignitie of this their birth, if you do compare it with the dignity and honor of the birth of the Church? It is a spirituall birth, yea the faithfull bee all borne of God. Then looke how farre the Lord God excelleth in honor the Kings of the earth, so his children excell their children in dignitie. The Princes of this world giue great honor to their children, but they cannot giue vnto them the honor of this heauenly birth, the Church onely hath it, and therefore he saith she is the only daughter of her mother, deare to her that bare, or as the word is, pure to her that brought her forth. This is, *Ierusalem* (as S. Paul saith) *which is free aboue, which is the mother of vs all*, she is the mother of the whole Church vpon earth: and she is mother vnto none else. All that be her children be the children of the most High.

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and honourable. The birth, or the honour touching the parentage of Queenes, the beauty and decking of Concubines and virgins, is great and highly esteemed in the eyes of the world: but it is not comparable to the honor, beautie, and rich ornaments of my doue, of my vndefiled, she standeth alone in all excellencie. All these Queenes and goodly women come not nigh her in any thing, she is without peere. For let vs consider euerie particular. It is a thing of great account in the world to bee the daughters of mightie Princes, to be the wiues and concubines of Kings: but what is the dignitie of this their birth, if you do compare it with the dignity and honor of the birth of the Church? It is a spirituall birth, yea the faithfull bee all borne of God. Then looke how farre the Lord God excelleth in honor the Kings of the earth, so his children excell their children in dignitie. The Princes of this world giue great honor to their children, but they cannot giue vnto them the honor of this heauenly birth, the Church onely hath it, and therefore he saith she is the only daughter of her mother, deare to her that bare, or as the word is, pure to her that brought her forth. This is, *Ierusalem* (as S. Paul saith) *which is free, which is the mother of vs all*, she is the mother of the whole Church vpon earth: and she is mother and none else. All that be true children be the children of the most High.

Thus we see how for dignitie and honor in birth, shee farre excelleth all the Queenes in the world. Then if we respect beautie and rich ornaments, what is all the beautie of the Queenes, the concubines and maidens of honor, and all their gorgeous attire and iewells, compared with her spirituall ornaments and beautie, euen the rich graces of the holy Ghost, by which she is comely in the eyes of God? Behold how honourable and how beautifull they be in the eyes of God which are rich in faith. And albeit our blind nature is such, as it is much moued with the pompe and glittering shew of the world, and cannot see into the glorie and riches of faith, or with what goodly ornaments it decketh the soule, especially in poore men which are in base estate: yet it pleaseth God sometimes to make the great ones in the world euen to wonder at the beauty and glory of his Church. And therfore it is added, the daughters haue seene her, & counted her blessed, the Queenes and concubines and they praised her. Then as I say, sometimes the Lords people, the Lords Nation, hath bin so honored by God here in the world, euen in the sight of men, that the very heathē Nations haue confessed that they were happie, God had done great things for thē. And marke the order here vsed for their praise, for he saith first, *that the daughters saw her, and counted her blessed.* These be the Virgins that he

spake

ſpake of, which are without number. Theſe Virgins do much behold the beauty of the Queene; and concubines, yet they looke alſo vpon their owne rich attire: and they account theſe great things, but ſo ſoone as euer they behold her, ſhe ſo dimmeth all their beautie and glorie, ſo that they ſet their eyes vpon her, and pronounce her bleſſed. Yea, the Queene and the concubines alſo which glorie in their owne pompe and dignitie, doe extoll her. For in the next verſe the ſpeech of their wonderment at her is thus expreſſed, *Who is this that looketh forth as the Morning, faire as the Moone, pure as the Sunne, terrible as an Armie with banners.* Here bee foure things, by which (as you ſee) they commend her wonderfull beautie. The firſt is the Morning, for they wondring demaund, who is this that looketh forth as the Morning? It is a goodly ſight to ſee how the bright Morning looketh forth. Alſo the Moone, which is the ſecond, when it is cleare, ſheweth a great beautie in the night. But the brightnes and puritie of the Sun, vnto which they liken her in the third place, is farre beyond all. And then in the laſt place, they ſay that ſhe is terrible as an Armie with banners. This terror as we noted before, is chiefly to the infernall Spirits, euen the Diuels againſt whom ſhe is armed with the whole armour of God: but yet theſe alſo do acknowledge a terror and a ma-

iestie. They that are conuersant in reading the holy Scriptures can tell, that God hath sundrie times greatly magnified his Church in the eyes of the world. Now let vs consider the whole matter to our owne comfort. How good is our estate, how well is it with vs: euen when we be poore and base, and miserable in the world, if we be of this number? We are not Kings, we are not Queenes, wee are not great Lords, wee are not Ladies, we are not in wealth, nor in pleasures: let vs neuer in murmuring sort thinke that the Lord hath dealt more hardly with vs, because he hath not giuen vs these things: but let vs consider that he giueth vs the greater, euē the things that excell all the glorie of this world. Yea, and let Queenes and great Ladies learne here, that their greatest glorie is not in their parentage, in their beautie, riches and ornaments, but if they be the true children of the Church, if they bee regenerate, euen borne of God, and decked with the gifts and graces of the holy Ghost: let them, I say, learne if they wil be wise, to esteeme this heauenly birth, these spirituall treasures and beautie aboue all other. We hold it great folly, euen in Kings and Queenes, and in all the great Lords and Ladies, if they so stand vpon the honor of their birth, and doe so glorie in their worldly pompe and riches, and are so drowned in earthly pleasures, as they thinke not vpon, nor e-

steeme the dignitie of the spirituall birth, but set light by the heauenly ornaments: because in so doing, they esteeme very drosse aboue pure gold. How then can we be excused? which hauing but euen as it were small droppes, yea but the scraps, or crummes of these worldly things, wherewith Kings and Queenes abound, do yet so esteeme them, as that wee looke not after those great things, which are bestowed vpon the Church, for we esteeme euen the drosse of drosse aboue all. Let therefore this great praise which the Lord giueth to his spouse, that set all the Queenes and honorable women in the world together, their dignitie, beauty and rich ornaments are nothing vnto hers, moue vs to seeke to be of that society. Is not this a worthy thing to be considered? Is it not a singular comfort that there is more dignity, more honor, more true glory and riches in the soule of one poore man or woman, that hath the true and liuely faith of Christ, then there is in all the Kings and Queenes of the earth. It may be obiected, that the glorie of the Kings is greater then the glorie of the Queenes, then seeing the Lord doth meane to commend the dignitie and beautie of this spouse by comparison, why doth he not compare her with the highest? For answer to this, you must note that the Church is brought in vnder the person of a woman, and therefore she is compared with women. As a Queene she is

compared with other Queenes, and she standeth alone in her glorie. Also this is to be vnderstood, that by the Queenes and concubines and virgins are meant the Nations, Kingdomes and Prouinces with all their glory: wherby you may see that the highest glory of Kings and Princes is comprehended. We will proceed: *I went downe to the garden of Nuts, to see the fruits of the valley, to see if the vine budded, and if the Pomegranates flourished. I knew not, my soule set me as the Chariots of my noble people.* Hitherto, as you haue seene, in this Chapter Christ hath highly commended his Church, to this end as I noted vnto you, that he had quite forgotten her vnkind dealing towards him and that there remained no blot of her offence; but all is washed away vpon her hartie repentance, and earnest seeking after him. Yet hee withdrew himselfe at the time of her vnkind dealing, but not for any loathing, but for another purpose, as heere now he mentioneth. For this is out of doubt that the Lord doth heere speake to comfort his spouse, and not to mention any thing to vpbraide her withall. Hee maketh mention of a going downe vnto her, he speaketh of a time past, euen that time which is mentioned in the former chapter, when he found her asleep. The Church is called a garden, *I went downe to the garden*, saith he. And here it is translated, the garden of nuts: being generally so taken by the

Hebrew

Hebrew Rabbines. The word which they take to signifie the nut, is not found elsewhere in all the Scriptures. And surely it seemeth a strange maner of speech to say, I went downe to the garden of nuts: and then mentioneth not that hee went to see the nut-trees, but to see the fruits of the valley, whether the vine did budde, or pomegranats flourished. They doe but gesse that the word should signifie either nut or nut-tree. It is farre more fit to take it thus, I went downe to the dressed garden. For Egoz, which is taken to be the nut, may be derived of gazaz, which signifieth to cut or to sheare. And so, as I said, it seemeth most fit so to take it, thus: I went downe into the dressed garden. For by this speech may be vnderstood all the cost and labour which the Lord bestowed vpon his vineyard, by the hands of his seruants the Prophets and Apostles, and by the ministry of all other faithfull teachers. Looke where planting, watring, dressing, and all maner of labour and cost is bestowed, there fruits are expected: and therefore it followeth, that the Lord went downe to his his garden, to see the fruits of the valley, to see if the vine budded, and if the Pomegranats flourished. Now heere the Spouse faulted: for she was fallen into securitie, and did not bring forth fruits answerable vnto so great graces as were bestowed vpon her. We must needs confesse this, that where much hath

beene bestowed, much is required: and yet the faithfull oftentimes which haue had great teaching, daily admonitions, and many gifts of the holy Ghost, do faile thus farre, that their fruits are but slender. Many complaints of this you shall find in the Prophets, and great afflictions for the same. And here the Lord saith, *I did not know*. What did he not know? Not such a flourishing of the plants as ought to haue been. And here as it seemeth, now after her repentance the speech is mitigated, lest hee should seeme to charge her ouer seuerely. For among men things are sometime, which when they do not flatly deny to haue bin, they say they knew not. But doth not Christ here vpbraid his Church? No verily, but he mentioneth her fault, to this end that she may be comforted, by knowing to what end he seemed to depart after hee had raised her out of her sleepe. His affection is great towards her, which doth cause him to seeke her speedie repentance. He perteth away most swiftly, as hee saith: *My soule set me vpon the chariots of my noble people*: or as the word doth signifie, *of my franke or willing people*. The willingnesse of the mind carrieth one speedily. Thus it is then, as if a louer should make all haste to fetch his friends and companions to accompany him to meet his spouse, and to behold her comelinesse and beautie in seeking to come vnto him. In the Church,

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when she hath offended, and doth repent, there is a great glorie of God set forth, and a right joyful spectacle to the holy Angels of heauen, which doe reioyce when sinners bee conuerted to the Lord.

Therefore in the next words he calleth vpon her to returne. Why, had she not returned? had she not sought him, confessing and bewailing her offences? Yes: He doth not vtter this speech vnto her now: *Returne, returne, O Shunamite, returne, returne, that we may looke vpon thee*: for what needed this vehement calling of her to repentance now, when he had so earnestly sought him? But he mentioneth how he called vpon her when she refused to open vnto him. Shee is called the Shunamite of Ierusalem, which was called *Shalem*, the name being deriued from peace: for the Church is at peace with God. Hee said, *Returne, returne, and we will looke vpon thee*. Euen he with his companions. And then to stir vp the same his companions to behold the beautie and glorie of her conuting, he saith: *What shall you see in the Shulamite*? and addeth, *as the two companies of Mahanaim*. The word signifieth the companies or tents of two armies that meete. When *Iacob* returned from *Laban*, as you may reade, Gen. 32. vers. 1. the Angels of God met him, and when *Iacob* saw them, he said, *This is Gods hoste*, and called the name of the same place

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Machanaim. Vnto this ioyfull meeting of those two armies, the Angels on the one part, and *Iacob* with his companions on the other, the Lord doth liken the returning of his Spouse vnto him: he with his holy Angels being one Armie, and she with her company another. A most ioyfull meeting, a glorious sight. Surely we are fallen a sleepe, and I suppose that before the Lord depart, and we be afflicted, we will not awake to seeke him.

THE TWELFTH SERMON.

CHAP. VII.

1 *How beautifull are thy goings with shooes, O Princes daughter? the ioynts of thy thighes are like iewels, the worke of the hands of a cunning workman.*

2 *Thy nauell is as a round cup that wanteth not liquor: thy belly is as an heape of wheat compassed about with lillies.*

3 *Thy two breasts are as two young Roes that are twins.*

4 *Thy necke is as a tower of Ivorie: thine eyes are like the fishpooles in Heshbone, by the gate of Bathrabbim: thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon, that looketh toward Damascus.*

5 *Thine*

5 Thine head vpon thee is as skarlet, and the hush of thine head like purple: the King is tied in the rafters.

6 How faire art thou, and how pleasant art thou, O my loue in pleasures?

7 This thy stature is like a Palme-tree, and thy breasts are like clusters.

8 I said, I will go vp into the palme-tree, I will take hold of her boughes: thy breasts shall now be like clusters of the vine, and the sauour of thy nose like apples.

9 And the roofe of thy mouth like good wine, which goeth straight to my welbeloued, and causeth the lips of the ancient to speake.

HEre is another commendation of the Church by her seuerall parts. If you demand why this is, seeing here is no speech of the Church, nor nothing that hath fallen out betweene the former commendation and this. Here is a new occasion for all that of praising the spouse. For as I noted, the former was for to comfort her, and to raise her vp after her affliction and sorrow, by assuring her that she was euen as precious and beautifull in his eyes, as she was before her vnkind dealing. And now hauing shewed that his withdrawing himselfe was for her good, euen to call her by a most serious repentance,

tance, their calling did take effect, she did returne vnto him, and now this commendation which is from the feete to the head, sheweth how comely and delectable shee was in her repentance, or in her returning vnto him. Wee may learne then how pleasant a thing it is in the eyes of the Lord, when his people that haue stepped awrie and gone astray, do returne vnto him by vnfained repentance. But let vs come to the words of the text. *How beautifull are thy goings with shoes, O Princes daughter?* The word is, *thy goings, or thy treadings, or thy steps, or thy feet.* The sence indeed commeth all to one, whether wee take it of the feete, or of the treadings: for the beautie of the feete, is in the right steppes. Here therefore by a word of admiration or wonderment is set forth how exceeding comely and beautifull her feete and steps be: for he saith, *How beautifull are thy goings?* When men depart away from the Lord, their steps be vncomely, their wayes be crooked wayes, euen such as the Lord God doth abhorre; But the Church seeking after Christ, in such sort as you haue seene before, and approching neerer and neerer vnto him, her steps, her treadings, her feet and all her wayes are marvellous beautifull in his eyes. And it is chiefly here to be noted, that he doth mention her shoes. Our translation saith, *How beautifull are thy goings with shoes?* but more fully to expresse the sence, and according to

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the verie words, we are to translate it thus: How beautifull are thy steppes, or thy feete with those shooes? For there is (as I may call it) the note of the demonstratiue particle. They be indeed a speciall kind of shooes, which shee had now on, which make her feete and goings so beautifull. You will demand what shooes be these? And I do demand what be the shooes which the holy Apostle willeth the faithfull to bee shod withall, Ephes. 6. You know he saith, *your feet being shod*, and then he nameth with what shooes, saying, *with the preparation of the Gospell of peace*, vers. 15. The bride had now got on these shooes, her feet were shod with the preparation of the Gospell of peace. The Gospell is the message of peace, and reconciliation betweene God and the world, assuring all those of true blessednesse which come vnto him: this doth prepare and arme their feete to go thorow all the difficulties of the way, which are very many, and very sharp. For he that hath once receiued the faith and vndoubted hope of the promises of the Gospell, what difficulty in the way shall keepe him back? True it is, that the diuell doth make the way exceeding rugged and painefull to discourage, but the bride is so shod that shee doth not shrinke, but treadeth downe all. And this is that which is so pleasant in the eyes of the Lord. In her carnall securitie, when shee was on sleepe, and bee

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with moſt louing ſpeeches called vpon her to open vnto him, her feet were not ſo well ſhodde: for then, *I haue put off my coate, how ſhall I put it on? I haue waſhed my feet, how ſhall I defile them?* Then euerie little matter in her way did withhold: but now, let there be what dangers, what enemies ſoeuer or difficulties, ſhee will thorow, and ſhee will not giue ouer vntill ſhee find him. And vpon this he crieth out: *How beautifull are thy goings with theſe ſhooes, O Princes daughter?* When men walke in their owne waies, their ſteps are not good in the ſight of the Lord, howſoeuer men thinke highly of their owne inuentions: but when the Goſpel doth prepare their feet to ſeeke the Lord, that is acceptable. Let vs then (beloued) get on theſe ſhooes, which ſhall make our feete and our treadings ſo beautifull in the ſight of the Lord. And which will alſo make vs ſo honorable in his ſight, which he expreſſeth in the next words ſaying, *O Princes daughter.* The Church is a moſt honorable virgin, fit by her parentage and birth, to bee the wife of ſo great a King: for ſhee is the daughter of the Prince of all Princes, ſeeing all the faithfull are borne of God. Indeed there is no worldly birth nor parentage of that dignitie to make a meet Spouſe for Chriſt, for what are men in themſelues: but the heauenly birth, which is not of the will of man, but of God, is of moſt high dignitie. The ſoule which is borne of God,

is neerely ioyned vnto Christ, for the regeneration is in Christ. Therefore (I say) seeke true repentance, which is a most precious iewell.

It followeth: *The ioynts of thy thighes are like iewels, the worke of thy handes of a cunning workeman.* Here also is a word not found elsewhere in the Scriptures. It is translated in our English, *the ioynts.* The word doth signifie turnings, or things that doe compasse about. It may indeed bee referred to the ioynts, or it may be taken for the girdle. For it was the manner that the bride did weare a girdle of goodly rich and costly iewels. And here they are likened vnto iewels made by a cunning workman. Then he compareth the nauell to a round cup that wanteth not liquour. A child in the wombe of his mother, receiueth his nourishment by the nauell: heere is comparison therefore of a cup that hath also in it for nourishment.

Then hee saith, that *her bellie is as an heape of wheate, compassed about with lillies.* Heere is fruitfulnesse represented by the heape of wheate: and heere is pleasant sweetnes resembled by lillies. Her two breasts are compared as before in this Song. I will not stand againe vpon any interpretation. *Her necke is as a tower of Ivorie.* This comparison doth not much differ from that of Moses, where he saith, *Thy necke is as the tower of Dauid built for an armorie,* shewing that there he respecteth

respecteth force, making mention of the shields of the mightie, and here the tower is of precious matter, and of a faire colour, the Iuorie being a cleare white.

Thine eyes are as the fish-poles in Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim. These were pooles of goodly cleare and pure water, at that gate in Ierusalem by which the greatest concourse of people was entring in and going out, for which cause the gate is called *Bath-rabbim*. *Bath* is as much as to say the daughter, and *rabbim*, is of many.

Thy nose is as the Tower of Lebanon, that looketh toward Damascus. This was a goodly Tower in the house which Salomon built in the forrest of Lebanon. Here are the goodliest and the stateliest thinges vpon earth brought in to resemble the Spouse. *Thine head vpon thee*, or as some doe take it, *in thine head*, that which is vpon thee, referring it to the the attire of her head, *is like skarlet, and the hush of thine head is like purple*. The word *dalleth*, signifieth that which is made small or slender: wherefore som take it for the haire of the head, for the smalnes of them, and some for the laces that bindeth up the haire. The matter is not great, but in the next clause there is some difficulnie. *The King is tyed in the rafters*, saith our English translation. What meaneth that? That the King is so fast to be neare his Spouse,

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and to behold her beauty and comelineſſe. Some doe expound it thus. A king would be inclined his galleries. As if he ſhould ſay, there is not any king that walketh in the middeſt of his glory, euen in his goodly galleries: but if he would behold thy beauty and glorie, it would cauſe him to ſtand amazed, he would no more looke vpon his owne glory but vpon thine, ſo farre doth thine excell all the glorie of this world. Surely eyther of theſe doth highly commend the beauty of the Church. If Chriſt be tied in the galleries to behold her, or if an earthly king would ſtand amazed at the ſight of her beautie: then doth it farre ſurmount all the glorie and riches of this world. There be others that haue taken it thus. *Thy buſh of haire is like the purple of a king hanged or tied in the galleries.* The diſtinguiſhing accent gainſayeth this: but it ſeemeth to bee the moſt native ſence of the words. The galleries and large roomes of kinges were hanged with goodly hangings of purple, or of ſome ſuch rich ſtuffe: vnto theſe hangings the hayre of the Spouſe may be compared. Euery way it ſetteth forth the comelines and beautie of the Spouſe, and therefore not much materiall which ſence we follow. Well, the Bridegroome hauing thus praiſed the beauty and comelineſſe of his Spouſe by ſeuerall parts; now he doth breake forth into an admiration and great wonderment at her beautie in the

whole, or in all laid together, saying: *How faire art thou, and how pleasant art thou, O my loue in pleasures?* This is brought in vpon all those former particulars: and therefore the wordes doe stand thus for the sense: *O loue*, or, *O my loue how faire art thou, and how pleasant art thou in euerie respect*, or, *in all partes*, or rather, *in all these heaped vp in one?* For as yee see, hee hath gone by particulars from the foote to the head. First, *How beautifull are thy goings with shoes, O Princes daughter?* Then, *the ioyntes of thy thighes are as iewels, the worke of thy handes of a cunning workeman.* After this, he speaketh of the nauell, which he likeneth to a round cup, that wanteth not liquor. Also her belly is compared to an heape of wheate compassed about with hilles. Her two breasts are as two young Roes that are twinnes. And so hee ascendeth, and saith, her necke is as a tower of Iuorie: her eyes like the fish-pooles of Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim. Her nose as the tower of Lebanon, that looketh toward Damascus: her head like Skarlet, and her haire like the purple of a King hanged in the galleries. In summe her beautie is wonderfull in all partes: she is comely throughout. We see beautie and comelinesse in men and women oftentimes, but not in all places alike: for sometime a beautifull, a comely and pleasant face, but not so

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comely a bodie. Or a comely bodie but not ſo well fauoured a face. Or if face and bodie bee comely, yet ſome defect in one part or other. This is not ſo in the Church of Chriſt: for ſhe in euery part is beautifull, delectable, and full of glorie.

Moreouer, that Chriſt doth ſpeake of her beautie in way of wonderment, it is from the heaping vp all thoſe particulars together (as I ſaid) in one. For where there be many goodly things, and euerie one by it ſelfe to be wondered at for beautie; how much may they be wondered at when they come all together to bee heaped vp in one? Take it thus, the Lord doth beſtow many goodly things vppon his Church, hee doth decke her with many rich ornamentes, euerie one of theſe is to be wondered at for excellency, then how much more when they come all together? But heere is an other circumſtance that dooth augment the matter: and that is from the perſon of him that hath her beautie in admiration. It is the Lord Ieſus who doth wonder at her beautie: hee can not wonder at a meane thing. Lay all the glorie of Kings before him, and it is but droſſe, hee cannot wonder thereat: for what is it to the glorie which hee doth inherite and dwell in? What is the glorie and beautie of the Sunne, the Moone and the Starres vnto him? Doth

whole, or in all laid together, ſaying: *How faire art thou, and how pleaſant art thou, O my loue in pleaſures?* This is brought in vpon all thoſe former particulars: and therefore the wordes doe ſtand thus for the ſenſe: *O loue*, or, *O my loue how faire art thou, and how pleaſant art thou in euerie reſpect*, or, *in all partes*, or rather, *in all theſe heaped vp in one*? For as yee ſee, hee hath gone by particulars from the foote to the head. Firſt, *How beautifull are thy goings with ſhoes, O Princes daughter*? Then, *the ioyntes of thy thighes are as iewels, the worke of thy handes of a cunning workeman.* After this, he ſpeaketh of the nauell, which he likeneth to a round cup, that wanteth not liquor. Alſo her belly is compared to an heape of wheate compaſſed about with hilles. Her two breaſts are as two young Roes that are twinnes. And ſo hee aſcendeth, and ſaith, her necke is as a tower of Iuorie: her eyes like the fiſh-pooles of Heſhbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim. Her noſe as the tower of Lebanon, that looketh toward Damaſcus: her head like Skarlet, and her haire like the purple of a King hanged in the galleries. In ſumme her beautie is wonderfull in all partes: ſhe is comely throughout. We ſee beautie and comelineſſe in men and women oftentimes, but not in all places alike: for ſometime a beautifull, a comely and pleaſant face, but not ſo

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comely a bodie. Or a comely bodie but not ſo well fauoured a face. Or if face and bodie bee comely, yet ſome defect in one part or other. This is not ſo in the Church of Chriſt: for ſhe in euery part is beautifull, delectable, and full of glorie.

Moreouer, that Chriſt doth ſpeake of her beautie in way of wonderment, it is from the heaping vp all thoſe particulars together (as I ſaid) in one. For where there be many goodly things, and euerie one by it ſelfe to be wondered at for beautie; how much may they be wondered at when they come all together to bee heaped vp in one? Take it thus, the Lord doth beſtow many goodly things vppon his Church, hee doth decke her with many rich ornamentes, euerie one of theſe is to be wondered at for excellency, then how much more when they come all together? But heere is an other circumſtance that dooth augment the matter: and that is from the perſon of him that hath her beautie in admiration. It is the Lord Ieſus who doth wonder at her beautie: hee can not wonder at a meane thing. Lay all the glorie of Kings before him, and it is but droſſe, hee cannot wonder thereat: for what is it to the glorie which hee doth inherite and dwell in? What is the glorie and beautie of the Sunne, the Moone and the Starres vnto him? Doth

hee wonder at them? Surely hee wondereth at the beautie of his Church; how excellent then is her beautie and glorie? They be rare things that Princes vpon earth doe wonder at: moſt rare which the king of kings hath in admiration. O tenne times happie are they, which ſhall be partakers of ſo great glorie. But may ſome men ſay, where is that companie in the world which is ſo goodly to behold? We ſee in all Churches that baſeneſſe and ſimplicitie which the world deſpiſeth. Wee ſee alſo many deformities, and ſpottes of ſinne in the beſt. In a word, we can ſee no matter of wonder how Chriſt ſhould deeme her ſo beautifull. I doe anſwere vnto this, that men are blinde in diſcerning the beautie and excellencie of ſpirituall ornaments. Alſo they be malignant, and for ſome deformities deſpiſe and depraue very excellent thinges. Yea but Chriſt ſpeaketh as if all were beautifull. That is in reſpect of the full beautie and glorie which hee will put vppon his Spouſe. For heerein the Lord beholdeth her, as hee will make her to himſelfe a glorious Church, not hauing ſpotte or wrinckle. There is in the faithfull that which is beautifull and pleaſant in the eyes of the Lord, euen the manifolde giftes and graces of his Spirite: but the beautie which hee ſo highly commendeth, and wondereth at, is rather in that

which

which ſhee ſhall bee, which hee now beholdeth.

But what meaneth this, that hee doth not only call her his loue, but his loue in pleaſures, in delightes, or in the things which wee eſteeme as dainties? Surely this doth much augment the matter, this is a verie forcible ſpeech to declare his exceeding affection towards her. We know men doe loue thinges, and take delight, but there bee degrees in their loue: they may loue things very well, yet that is the higheſt when they take their chiefe pleaſure and delight in that which they loue. So Chriſt ſheweth heere, that he taketh delight and pleaſure in his faire Spouſe, ſhe is euen a dearling and a dainty vnto him. They be much deceiued then which ſuppoſe that Chriſt maketh but as it were a common account of his Church.

Then hee addeth, *This thy ſtature is like the Palme tree, thy breaſtes like cluſters.* The Palme tree is of ſtature tall and ſtraight, ſhe is reſembled thereby. Alſo they ſay, that it is the nature of that tree, not to be preſſed downe with waight, but groweth vp the more. Surely the holy Spouſe is not bowed down, nor made crooked by waight and burthen of afflictions. But wee ſhall ſee afterward how hee proſecuteth this compariſon, in which he doth liken her to the Palme tree, what a promiſe he maketh vnto

her, and what a blessing doth follow from the same.

And now that he saith, *Her breastes are like clusters*, It is to be vnderstood (as it seemeth by the next verse) of the clusters of the Vine, a sweete and a wholesome fruite, and so the breasties of the Church, by which she nourisheth all her children, are repleniſhed with verie sweete milke. We haue spoken of this before, what the breasts are, and what that sincere milke is, by which the faithfull are nourished. The truth is, that albeit the Testaments be the Lords, and not the word or doctrine of man, yet they are thus farre become the breasts of the Church, that none can sucke from them the wholesome nourishment, vnlesse hee take them as her breasts. I meane thus: Some will say, the word is the Lords, we are not to respect men; and so they will seeme to haue the vse and benefit of the word of God, to giue them life, to nourish and feede them; but they despise the Church, they condemne her, and separate themselues from her. These can haue no saluation by the word of GOD, though they haue it in their handes and reade it; for the Lord hath made it the wholesome foode of life, as it commeth out of the breasties of the Church. Let vs then take heede, least with Schismatikes, Heretikes and Sectaries, wee separate not our selues from

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her that hath these breasts, and which alone doth bring forth, and nourish vp children to God.

Now followeth a promise of the dressing, this palme tree, and a declaration of the fruitfulnesse that shall spring from the same dressing. The promise is in these words: *I haue said I will go vp into the palme tree, I wil take hold of her boughs.* The declaration of the fruitfulnesse is in these words: *and thy breasts shall now be like the clusters of the vine, and the sauour of thy nose like apples. And the roofe of thy mouth like good wine, which goeth straight to my welbeloued, and causeth the lippes of the ancient to speake.* Touching the former of these, that is the promise which Christ maketh of dressing his Church, the speech is framed according to the manner of dressing the Palme trees; for hauing compared her to a Palme tree, he continueth the allegorie. The husbandmen when they did dresse and trim their Palme trees, went vp into them, and so laid hold of euerie bough to dresse the same. According to this, the Lord saith heere, *I haue said*, that is, I haue decreed, I haue promised, and will performe it, that I will goe vp into the Palme tree, and I will lay hold of her boughes. Which then you see, is as much to say, I will dresse my Palme tree. For the Lord doth bestow all manner of dressing and trimming of his Church, to make her fruitful. And

this wanteth not effect: for hee declareth how fruitfull and how exceeding ſweete ſhe ſhall become by his dreſſing. Firſt he ſaith, *her breaſtes ſhall be as elußters of the vine.* Hee ſaid, that they were like cluſters before, and now they ſhall be more. It may be ſaid: how can that be, are not her breaſts alwaies the ſame? Is not the word of God in the Teſtaments alwaies one? It is alwaies one and the ſame: but the Church doth miniſter the word as it were out of her breaſtes more aboundantly, and in more excellent manner then at another. Her breaſts then are alwaies like cluſters of the vine, there is in them a right holeſome and ſweete iuyce: but when the Lord powreth forth vpon her the greateſt meaſure of his ſpirit, then doth ſhe in moſt plenteous manner draw forth her breaſts, and miniſter food vnto her children. The Church of Rome hath remoued away the ſincere milke of Gods word from her children, bearing them in hand that it is no better then poyſon: and ſhe draweth forth other breaſts, which are full of the ſwill and dregs of her owne inuentions, and with the ſame ſhee doth nouriſh, or rather kill and murther. Let vs earneſtly craue of the Lord, that in theſe our daies he will goe vp into his Palme tree, and lay hold on her boughes, that ſo her breaſts may be as cluſters of grapes, yea that the heauenly doctrine may be ſincerely and plenteouſly vttered.

There

There bee many that hold the places of Paſtors which be like drie Nurſes. There be that handle the word ſo, as it doth little good to the hearers.

Let vs proceed: hee ſaith, *And the ſauour of thy noſe like apples.* Men doe vſually breath at their noſe: then this is to declare that the church ſhall breath out nothing but ſweetnes. All that approch neare vnto her, ſhall ſmell the ſauour of her ſweet breath. Let vs well conſider of this, euen to trie our ſelues whether wee bee of the Church: for many doe boaſt and brag that they be true children of the Church, which yet breath out nothing but a ſtinking breath. Yea their breath is ſo loathſome to all that can ſmel, that it cannot be endured. Are theſe then of the church? Is the ſauour of their noſe as the ſauor of apples?

Laſtly he ſaith: *And the roofe of thy mouth like good wine, &c.* The roofe of the mouth is here put for that which proceedeth out of the mouth. And if any ſhall demaunde, what is that which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Church? I anſwere it is the holy word and doctrine of the Lord, which ſhe doth profeſſe and publiſh. This liuely word is here likened vnto good wine, which is deſcribed in the latter part of the verſe, by the propertie and by the effect. Our Engliſh tranſlation for the one ſaith, *it goeth ſtraight to my welbeloued*: and for the other, that *it cauſeth the lips of the ancient to ſpeake.* The words ſtand

thus,

thus, going to loues, to rightneſſes, which may rightly in the phraſe of our tongue be ſaid, moving it ſelfe in moſt louely manner, and moſt rightly. For ſo doth the mightie ſtrong wine moue it ſelfe when it is powred into the cup. And then for the latter clauſe, that it maketh to ſpeake the lips of the ancient: *Iaſhan* in the Herew doth ſignifie to ſleep, and to wax old. Hereupon ſome ſay it cauſeth the ancient to ſpeake. Which is no ſmall effect, ſeeing men that are very old haue their ſences dulled, and are very ſlow to ſpeake. The mightie wine doth moue and quicken the dull ſpirits, euen of the aged. Or as others doe take it, that it cauſeth the lips of them that bee aſleepe to ſpeake. That is more, yea if wee conſider it in the ſimilitude, it is hyperbolicall: but in the thing repreſented, that is the preaching of the Goſpell, it is moſt true. For thus it is, the word which proceedeth from the mouth of the Church is as ſtrong wine that moueth and quickneth the dull ſpirits, not only as it were in men whoſe ſences are dulled with age, but euen in thoſe that bee aſleepe, yea in a dead ſleepe of ſinne. It raiſeth and quickneth ſuch, it cauſeth their lips to ſpeake to the praiſes of God, which before had no power that way. O beloued, if we be not in a dead ſleepe, yet to ſpeake holy things, to ſpeake to the praiſes of the Lord and edification of our brethren, wee are as old men:

men: let vs receiue this strong wine from the mouth of the Church which may quicken our spirits.

THE THIRTEENTH SERMON.

CHAP. VII.

10 *I am my welbeloueds, and his desire is towards me.*

11 *Come my welbeloued, let vs goe forth into the field, let vs remaine in the villages.*

12 *Let vs get vp early to the vines, let vs see if the vine flourish, whether it hath budded the small grape, whether the Pomegranates flourish, there will I giue thee my loue.*

13 *The mandrakes haue giuen a smell, and in our gates are all sweete things new and old: my welbeloued I haue kept them for thee.*

CHAP. VIII.

1 *O that thou were as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my Mother: I would find thee without, I would kisse thee, then they should not despise me.*

2 *I will leade thee, and bring thee into my Mothers house: there shalt thou teach me: I will*

cause

cause thee to drinke spiced wine, and new wine of the Pomegranate.

3 *His left hand shall be vnder my head, and his right hand shall imbrace me.*

4 *I charge you, daughters of Ierusalem, that you stirre not vp nor wake my loue, vntill she please.*

WE haue heard the great praise and commendation which Christ giueth to his Spouse: first to comfort her by letting her vnderstand for certaintie that the blot of her offence was vtterly taken away, her comelines and beautie was no lesse in his eyes then before: and secondly, that it may appeare what a glorious thing in the sight of God true repentance is. Moreouer in the last place, we haue seene the promise of the Lord, what hee would doe for his Church, and how fruitfull, sweet and precious shee should become thereby. Now the Church answereth, expressing at large her affection and dutie towards Christ: that seeing his kindnesse had bin so great towards her, she doth euen as it were dedicate, vow, and consecrate her selfe and all that she hath vnto him, hasting in desire, and longing for the day of marriage. Here is no more alteration in the Church: but as the song began with her great desires of Christ, so it endeth. For, how-

howsoeuer the faithfull doe slip and fall, swarue and goe astray for a time, yet they rise againe, they returne into the right way.

But let vs come to hor words, *I am my welbeloueds, and his affection is towardes mee.* The conjunction may more rightly be taken thus, seeing or because his affection is towards me. For in the former clause of the sentence shee professeth and voweth her selfe and all that shee hath wholy to Christ saying, *I am my welbeloueds*: and in the other clause she rendreth a reason, saying, *because his affection is towardes mee.* His kindnesse then towardes her wrought this effect, that shee and all hers shall be dedicated to him. The cause goeth before the effect, and therefore let vs first speake of that. For the sum of her speech commeth to this much in effect: seeing my Spouse hath set his affection so vpon me, and freely loued me when I was vtterly turned away from him, when I was his enemy Rom. 5. When I was dead in sinnes and trespasses, Ephes. 2. When I had nothing in me but that which was vncleane and abhominable, Rom. 3. Moreouer, seeing his affection towards me is so constant, that hauing redeemed me, called and sanctified me with his spirit, garnishing and decking mee with his heauenly giftes and graces, and I shewing my selfe vnkind and very vndutiful towards him, defiling and deforming my selfe, yet his loue continueth one, he doth

doth forgiue me, he doth imbrace me, hee doth accompt me as faire and precious, as if I had neuer sinned against him: Is there not cause that I should wholy bee his? No man can deny the reason of this. Such aboundant loue doth craue loue againe. And now consider what it is, when shee saith, *I am my welbeloueds*. For though it be set first, yet it dependeth (as I said) vpon the latter. If she be his, then she is not her owne. Shee is not to liue to her selfe, or to the flesh, but vnto Christ. This is it that Saint *Peter* saith *that henceforth wee should liue not after the lustes of men, but after the will of God*. 1. *Pet*. 4 *vers*. 2. This is when the faithfull doe loue, obey and honor the Lord, for if they doe not loue him, how are they his? If they doe not obey him, how doe they loue him? This saith Saint *Iohn*, *is the loue of God, if wee keepe his commandements*. 1. Iohn. 5. And if men breake the commandements, and liue in euill vices, how doe they honour the Lord? You see therefore how the Church saith, *I am my welbeloueds*. The whole man both bodie and soule is consecrated to Christ. Here wee may see plainely, that such as walke in wickednesse, neuer feele the louing kindnes of the Lord. They haue not the true and liuely faith. For this is faith, when the soule feeleth assuredly that Christ hath set his affection vpon her, he hath redeemed and sanctified her, hee wipeth away all her spots, and hea-

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leth all her infirmities? Though shee offend, yet his loue and kindnesse doth remaine. Now from the feeling of this, it cannot be, but the soule is euen rauished with loue towards him, and giueth vp her selfe to doe that which may delight and please him. So that, as I said, such as lead a wicked life, neuer felt the loue and kindnesse of the Lord, they neuer had the true and liuely faith. Beloued, if any man be desirous to be Christs, that is to say, if he wil loue, obey and honour him: if he will not liue to himself but to the Lord: here is the head and the fountaine, when shee saith, *I am my welbeloueds, because his affection is towards mee*: let him first apprehend the loue and affection of Christ. For that loue of Christ (as S. *Paul* speaketh) will constraine him to loue againe. And before a man doe feele that God hath loued him, hee may as it were force himselfe to speake and doe good things, but they cannot be acceptable, for they doe not proceed from a franke and free heart, they spring not from loue. What is it, when a man eyther of a seruile feare, or from some sinister respect doth abstaine from that wich is euill, if his heart within doe loue and delight in it? Or what good doth he, which outwardly with his handes performeth some good deedes which his heart delighteth not in? And now behold how forward and readie the Bride is to performe her dutie, and to haue the day of the mar-

marriage approach. Shee is not the woman that shee before was in the fift Chapter, where shee made excuses and would not arise to open to Christ, for now shee calleth vnto him, saying, *Come my welbeloued, let vs goe forth into the field, let vs lodge in the villages*, or as it may bee translated, at the Cyprus-trees: The Lord did promise in the former Chapter, that hee would goe vp into the Palme tree and take hold of her boughes, hee would dresse his Church, and shee should thereupon become most flourishing, fruitfull and delectable, vnto this she offereth her seruice. It is vnto this, for it could bee no praise in her to moue him vnto any thing which hee had not promised, She doth not name the Palme tree but Cyprus trees, and the Vines; but the matter is all one, seeing the Church is resembled by the one as well as by the other. Then thus it is, the Lord promiseth to dresse and trim his Church, she offereth her selfe most cheerefull and willing thereunto. Hee will bestow his rich graces and giftes vpon her, and shee is euen on thirst for them. It becommeth all the faithfull, when the Lord promiseth his graces & heauenly blessings to shewe themselues forwarde and readie to receiue them, and to put to all their care and diligence, that their hearts may bee sanctified and purged, that so they may be fit to bring forth sweet fruites. The Lord doth call them to arise

from

from the delight of these earthly thinges and to set their affection on thinges that bee aboue: so the Bride here offereth her selfe to goe forth into the fieldes, and euen to lodge among the Cyprus trees, that she may rise vp earely in the morning to goe to the Vines. Shee is now so rapt with the loue and desire of heauenly things that her mind & her affections are carried out of the world, she will now euen lodge in a continuall meditation and delight of them, yea shee will daily raise vp her self earely to behold the fruit that doth spring from them. This is a marualous good estate and right commendable, that she is now in. Before this, she was laid downe on sleepe in her bed, she was loath to be raised vp. Behold here the difference of the godly after their afflictions, from that they were when wordly ease and prosperitie had taken hold on them. Then the gifts of the spirit lie as it were buried, and all groweth euen as it were rustie: but when the fierie triall commeth, when they be cast as gold into the furnace, the drosse is burned out, they shine bright, they be raised vp and quickned. These things (I say) we may behold in her forwardnes, ouer that she was in the fift Chapter. This may teach vs all to feare our selues in our long prosperitie that wee haue enioyed here in this our land. We haue had it so long, that we doe scarse thinke of afflictions: and greatly it is to bee desired that such peace

might still continue; so it might not bee to our great harme. But hath not prosperitie euen drawen the heartes of the most which professe the Gospell, into carnall securitie? Doe we now say (as the Bride here) *Come my welbeloued let vs goe out into the field, let vs lodge among the Cypres trees, let vs rise vp early to the vines: let vs see if the vine flourish, &c.* Are we thus readie and forward vnto the search and imbracing of spirituall and heauenly graces? Are we so delighted with them, as to make them our meditation night and day, and so as it were euen to lodge in them? Are our affections so fixed and set, that wee doe euer ioy to behold the fruits of righteousnesse? Nay rather, is not euery man almost fallen on sleepe, and doth not the minde euen lodge in the desires of these earthly things? Is not the whole care and studie how to heape vp gold and siluer, how to get lands and possessions? Shall the Lord let vs alone in this estate? Whither will wee fall whither will wee runne? how great is the complaint that is daily vttered euery where, against the ouersightednesse of those that should bee lights, and guides vnto others? The Lord calleth and knocketh daily to haue vs open vnto him. And if we count it a good thing to enioy ful our worldly peace and prosperitie: let vs cheerefully and willingly rise vp, let vs offer our selues to goe into the field, to lodge among the sweete things.

Doubtlesse

Doubtlesse there is great hope, if we raise vp our mindes to doe as the holy Spouse here doth, wee shall enioy all all good thinges. If not, we shall haue some great afflictions to raise vs vp, for the Lord will not suffer his Church to goe to vtter ruine. It is best for vs (if wee could wisely consider of it) and most for our ease to doe that which the Spouse doth here, before affliction come, for then we shall preuent it, and turne it away. And now behold how shee doth proceed in this matter, longing for the day of the marriage. *Let vs rise vp early to the vines, let vs see if the vine flourish, whether it haue budded the small grapes: there will I giue thee my loue.* The flourishing of the vine, budding of the small grape, and likewise of the Pomegranates, are the fruites of the graces of God in the assemblies, and the signes of the approching of the marriage day. The gifts and graces of the holy ghost should be powred forth in vaine, if these sweete fruites should not thereupon bud and florish. And when these things are, or with these things, the Bride saith, she will giue her loue to Christ? Shee will giue vp her selfe to loue him, yea euen perfectly when the day of the marriage commeth. The faithfull doe now loue the Lord Iesus, some with great loue, some with lesse, according to the measure of their faith. For looke how much more firmely and assuredly a man feeleth the loue of God towards him, so much

much more feruently doth he loue God. And so the bride speaketh here of an increase of her loue. As his graces abound towards her, and the fruits thereof more increase, so her loue shall more increase, and especially at the time when shee shall be fully vnited vnto him.

In the next verse shee mentioneth her fruites, and that she reserueth them wholy to Christ her welbeloued. *The Mandrakes haue giuen their smell*, (saith shee) or as some doe take the word more generally for all amiable flowers, such as be faire and louely: for the Church is as a garden of sweete flowers. Moreouer shee mentioneth the plentie of good fruites, both new and old, which be within her gates, and that shee hath reserued and kept them onely for him. These are most commendable thinges that she speaketh of: first, that she doth so florish and abound in sweet things, which are all holy vertues and fruits of faith, and secondly, that she keepeth them only for her Lord. For the true Spouse is chast and faithfull vnto Christ: shee trusteth in him alone, she runneth not a whoring after false Gods: but she honoureth and worshippeth her Lord with all the fruites of her faith: *My loue*, (saith shee) *I haue kept them for thee*. The Church in this place differeth much from that which the Lord complaineth of in the fift Chapter of the Prophet Esay, for there he sheweth what hee did for

his

his vineyard, and when he looked it should bring forth good grapes, it brought forth stinking grapes. The generall estate of our Church in this land is liker to that in the Prophet, then to this here spoken of. The stinking grapes hang among vs in great clusters very plenteously euery where: for what vices doe not abound? but the amiable flowers, and the sweet fruites both new and olde how scarse are they? Let vs assure our selues, that if we be not of the number of those which bring forth sweet fruites vnto Christ, it shall not auaile vs, that wee haue place for a time in the visible Church, and bee named and reputed Christians. Thou art a branch of the vine: but as it is written, or as Christ saith, *Euerie branch in me that beareth not good fruit, he taketh away.* Iohn 15. The Lord of his infinite goodnesse and mercie looke vpon this Realme, and so dresse this vine, that it may flourish and bring forth good fruit, and in more plentifull manner then hetherto, least the Kingdome of God bee taken from vs, and giuen to a Nation that will bring forth the fruits thereof.

Shee proceedeth on forward in the next chapter, declaring what a great desire she hath to bee in his presence, & so retaine him with her, which ariseth from a vehement loue, whose heat cannot be quenched, as she afterward expresseth. They that be of one family as brothers and sisters, doe

dwell

dwell together in familiaritie, each doth easily know where to finde another. According to this she saith: *O that thou were as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother, I would find thee without, I would kisse thee, then they should not displease me.* The time will come when she shall indeed dwell with him, as brothers and sisters do dwell together, when there shall be most neere familiarity, when she shal find him and imbrace him, and for this time she doth wish. Indeed shee hath great cause to wish that shee might once come to dwell with him: for the fulnesse of her joy and felicitie consisteth therein. He doth not now indeed leaue her comfortlesse while she is vpon earth, but giueth her the comfortable signes of his presence, and at some times more then other, but she lieth subiect vnto many reproches, contumelies and proud scornings of the wicked & vngodly men of this world. Therefore she saith *also they shal not despise me.* The glorie of the whole Church shall be so great that her proudest enemies shall not despise her, but wonder at her. The faithfull are now the children of God, but as S. *Iohn* saith, *it doth not appeare what they shall be*, 1. *Iohn* 3. An easie thing it is now to contemne and despise the most godly that liue vpon the earth: for the blind world cannot iudge but according to outward appearance. And so because they see not in them outward

ward glorie, they raile on them, they reproch them, they account them euen as abiects and most contemptible. But when they shall appeare with Christ in glory, their glory shall be so great, that none shall despise them. The diuels and all the damned cannot but be tormented with enuie, at the beholding of the glorious estate of Gods chosen, whom they had in derision, and the end of whose life those reprobate men accounted foolishnesse, the diuell hardening their hearts, and blinding the eyes of their minds: but despise them any longer they cannot. Heere is a good comfort for such as dwell among scoffers, scorners and deriders of religion. Let them scoffe and deride for a time at such as studie to please God: the time will come, when all basenesse, and all infirmities being removed, they shall behold them in another estate, in which they shall not despise them.

After she hath expressed her wish, and what benefit she shall receiue thereby, she sheweth what dutie she for her part will performe vnto him. For a verie vnreasonable thing it were, that the Church receiuing so great benefits by Christ should not render some duties of thankfulnesse vnto him. And therefore she saith, *I will lead thee, and bring thee vnto my mothers house.* Jerusalem from aboue is the mother of al, the Church at any time vpon earth is her daughter. The house

of this her mother, then in this place seemeth to bee the heauens into which the Church shall accompanie the Lord. For shee shall neuer dwell together with him in that familiar sort which she spake of, vntill she come there.

The next clause standeth doubtfull, whether we shall translate it, thou shalt teach me, or shee shall teach me, for in the Hebrew tongue in the future, the same word standeth for the third person feminine, that is, for the second masculine, And so I say, it standeth indifferent here by the word, whether we say, thou shalt teach me, or she shall teach me. True it is, that the Lord Iesus is in a double respect, the onely teacher, and that is thus, that onely his doctrine is to be taught, and he alone lighteneth with his spirit. But the vniuersall Church, as the mother of all particular Churches, doth as an instrument vnder Christ, teach and instruct with the same heauenly doctrine. And so we may take it here that she saith to Christ, thou shalt teach mee (which I take to bee the righter, if we take it here to be spoken of the time when the Church shall dwell with Christ in the heauens; for then there shall bee no more teaching by men) or that shee saith, her mother shall teach her, or hath taught her, if one tense may bee vsed for another. But what is that shee is to be taught? Euen how she ought, or how she may rightly performe her dutie towardes Christ,

and that is set forth in the next words, *I will cause thee to drinke spiced wine, and wine of the Pomegranate.* According to the similitude in earthly things, she professeth to entertaine him with a daintie banquet in her mothers house. For that is meant by the spiced wine, and wine of the Pomegranate. The spirituall things thereby signified, are the praises by which she will magnifie and set forth his glory. The Lord hath no need of any creatures to set forth his glory and praise: for he hath all fulnesse of ioy and happinesse in himselfe: but it is his holy will that his creatures shall be partakers of his glory, and that they shall set forth his praise, and the same praising of him is most acceptable & delightsome vnto him, which the Bride expresseth heere by spiced wine, and by the iuyce of the Pomegranate. This may encourage vs to be most ready and forward in glorifying the Lord, seeing it is so delightsome and pleasing in his sight. If our obedience, our thanks, our praise, our glorifying God, be as spiced wine vnto him, what wretches are we, if we cannot thereby be moued to those holy duties?

The two next verses we haue had before: the one how Christ doth imbrace his Church, support, comfort and vphold her with both hands. She doth rest in his armes: for as she saith: *His left hand is vnder my head, and with his right hand he doth imbrace me.* Were it not for this, the

Spouse

Spouse could neuer endure here in the world. This is our comfort, that the Lord Iesus doth thus, as it were with both handes, or both his armes vphold and comfort his chosen. The other verse is a charge that she layeth vpon the daughters of Ierusalem, that they doe not stirre vp, nor wake her loue, vntill she please. There bee some words omitted of the forme of the charge giuen before, but the matter is all one. Shee doth very seriously enioyne her companions or daughters to behaue themselues so reuerently and soberly in the presence of this most glorious bridgrome, that no cause be offered vnto him of displeasure, by which he might take occasiō to depart. When our Lord Iesus sheweth himselfe most present with his people, by euident tokens of his graces and heauenly gifts: such is the vnreuerent wantonnesse of some, that they doe not consider in whose presence they bee. They bee in the assemblies, as it were in an Alehouse, or in an Inne: so little they regard the presence of Christ, or holy things. God grāt that we may regard this straight charge laid vpon vs. Amen

THE

THE FOVRTEENTH SERMON

CHAP. VIII.

5. *Who is this that commeth vp out of the wilderneſſe, leaning vpon her welbeloued? I raiſed thee vp vnder an apple tree, there thy Mother conceiued thee, there ſhe conceiued that bare thee.*

6. *Set mee as a ſeale on thine heart, and as a ſignet vpon thine arme for loue is as ſtrong as death, ielouſie is cruell as the graue: the coales thereof are fiery coales, and a vehement flame.*

7. *Much water cannot quench loue, neither can the ſtreames drowne it: If a man ſhould giue all the ſubſtance of his houſe for loue, they would greatly contemne it.*

E haue had in this ſong the ſtate of the church here vpon earth, variable after diuers ſorts: as often now calling & crying out for her welbeloued: not long after we haue her as it were ſet downe, and the Bridgeroome calling vpon her to ariſe, and come away. Yea ſometimes ſhe is not onely ſet downe, but alſo ſhe

is

is laid downe and a sleepe and vnmindfull of her duty. The godly doth not continue alwaies alike: but this we must know, that howsoeuer they swerue for a time, yet they returne, and their end is commendable. And therefore the Church here euen tothe end of this song continueth in faith, in zeale, and in performance of all good duties. Here is no more swaruing, here is no dulnesse, or slackenesse any more mentioned. This I say may be noted, that all and euery one of the true beleeuers, euen the chosen of God, stand to the end.

But let vs come to the words that I haue now read vnto you. First in generall the Bride doth declare her most ardent loue towardes Christ, in al these three verses. As the words do stand in our English translation, it cannot bee discerned who vttereth this sentence, *Who is this that ascendeth vp out of the wilderness leaning vpon her welbeloued? I raised thee vp vnder an apple tree &c.* For there is nothing by the speech to hinder, but that the Bridegrome may speake it touching his Bride, that hee stirred her vp vnder an apple tree. Also it may seeme to bee the speech of some others, and least of all it seemeth to be the speech of the Bride. But the Hebrew text doth make it most cleare, and out of all doubt and controuersie, that it is the Bride which speaketh: because this clause, *I raised thee vp, &c.* and also this,

Thy

Thy mother conceiued thee, are spoken in the masculine gender, as to a man, and not as vnto a woman. In her first words then she setteth forth the vehemencie of her loue, as it were by a comparison, saying, *Who is she* (for so the words are) *that commeth vp, &c.* As if she should say, where is she to be found that hath shewed the like loue to her welbeloued that I haue shewed vnto mine? Where is there any Bride that hath by such effectes declared her loue to her Bridegroome, as I haue to mine? That hath taken such trauaile and indured so many afflictions, passed through so great perils, to come to her spouse, as I haue vnto mine? What then will some man say, is this the humilitie of the Church? Doth she now glorie and boast what she doth for Christ? This her boasting is not in her selfe, or in her own merits, or in any vphraiding manner, what she had done for Christ: it is not contrarie vnto humilitie. For the faithfull when they haue been very feruent in loue and zeale towards Christ, and haue endured great things for his sake, may to their comfort both remember and euen mention to the Lord, what they haue endured & gone through for his sake. For withall they do acknowledge, and that vnfainedly, that they haue been enabled, & made fit thereunto by his grace, & so their glorying is not in themselues, but in the Lord. Moreouer, when we can rightly call to minde and mention

what

what hard things we haue willingly endured for the loue of Christ, it boldeneth vs to make request vnto him. For this matter, reade the last Chapter of *Nehemiah*, where you shall finde how hee reckoneth vp what, and what he had done, and then praieth to the Lord to remember him therin, & in vers. 22. he craueth that he would pardon him according to his great mercy: whorby it appeareth that *Nehemiah* did not mention his well doing, as it were to stand in his owne deserts, for why then should he pray the Lord to pardon him, according to his great mercie? Euen so the Church heere, mentioning what she hath done for Christ, doth not glorie in her selfe. Now marke with what speech she vttereth the effectes of her loue. *Who is she that commeth out of the wildernesse, leaning vpon her welbeloued*, or as the word may be expounded, accompanying her welbeloued? Who is she that to finde her welbeloued, and to be in his company, hath ascended out of the wildernesse? All the difficultie of the word, which declareth her most vehement loue, is, in ascending for his sake out of the wildernesse? What is then this wildernesse? It is the world and all worldly desires. Is that may some man say, such a great matter, that she ascendeth out of this world to seeke Christ? yea, if you doe well consider what it includeth in it, you will confesse that shee may well demaund

who

who is the that hath euer done the like? You know what our Sauiour saith, that *except a man denie himselfe, except he forsake father and mother, wife and children, houses and lands, yea and his life, and take vp his crosse and follow him, he cannot be his disciple.* All this is heere included in this one speech of the Bride, when she saith, *that ascendeth out of the wildernesse.* Hee that ascendeth out of the wildernesse, denyeth himselfe, for the loue he beareth to Christ, hee mortifieth and subdueth all the sinfull lustes of the flesh, he renounceth the delights and pleasures of sinne, which are so sweete vnto the naturall man. And rather then he will denie the truth of Christ, hee will loose and forsake all things that are the dearest vnto him in the world, yea, euen life it selfe, although it be with all exquisite torments. We may see then that this is no small thing, that she ascendeth vp out of the wildernesse. They that for the loue of Christ forsake carnall pleasures, mortifie the lustes of the flesh, forgoe worldly commodities, endure all reproches and bitter persecutions euen vnto death, ascend vp out of the wildernesse, for to associate themselues to Christ: and it is a wonderfull vehement loue that carrieth them so farre. She may well say then, who is the that ascendeth vp out of the wildernesse accompanying her welbeloued? For what Bride is there that hath for her welbeloued, or to

accompany her welbeloued, indured such things? Let vs marke well the speech of the Church in this place, because there be many which professe to loue Christ, which yet doe not ioyne themselues in societie with him to ascend vp out of the wildernesse. They professe the Gospell, but yet they take all delights and pleasures of the flesh, that they can: they liue euen as other men heere in their worldly course do liue; surely these are not like the Bride.

The other part of her speech is harder, when she saith, *I raised thee vp vnder an apple tree, there thy mother conceiued thee, there she trauailed, &c.* First wee must obserue, that the Bride speaketh as a Spouse that had sought vp her welbeloued, and found him, resting vnder an apple tree: she raiseth him vp to go with him into the heauenly places: for this her, in heart and affection doe the godly, euen while they liue heere, ascend vp with Christ, when they haue sought and found him. That she saith vnder an apple tree, we must vnderstand, that the apple tree of old hath bene dedicate to Loue. So that in this we may consider the loue la which Christ reteth towards his Church: for were it not for that vnchangeable loue which he beareth towards her, how should she find him, or where should she finde him? She vsed another speech before in this song, and said that loue was his banner ouer her. By his loue she is drawn

vnto

vnto him, euen as the soldiers doe assemble vnto their banner or ensigne when it is spread. She here raiseth him vp vnder an apple tree: all is to bee referred vnto his great loue, by that she is drawne vnto him, by that she findeth him, and by that his loue so abounding, is her loue towards him kindled and inflamed. Also vnder this apple tree, the mother of this bridegroome did conceiue him. But who is that mother of Christ that conceiued him in this loue, or through this his loue? Surely her mother is Christs mother: for she is not only the spouse of Christ, but as he saith, *My sister, my spouse.* She her selfe is then also the mother of Christ: for the Church, euen all the faithfull doe through faith, trauaile with Christ. That one place, *Reuel.* 12. doth sufficiently teach vs this point, where the ancient Church of the Iewes doth trauaile with Christ, and bring him forth. The promises were made of old, that he should come and be borne of a woman, the chosen did beleeue it, and expect it, vnto the in faith he is borne, yea their faith doth euen as it were trauaile and bring him forth. So the Church is the mother of Christ: and Christ in the Gospell calleth his disciples, his mother, his brethren and sisters: and euery faithfull soule doth through faith conceiue Christ, and the whole Church doth now trauaile with child, to bring him forth in his second comming, as the

ancient Church at his first comming. All this faith apprehendeth his loue, and therefore is said he ere to be vnder an apple tree. The things are very misticall: and it doth stand vs vpon, if wee will be the true children of the Church, to looke well vnto them. I meane that we come to seele the loue of Christ, and thereby to conceiue him. For if Christ dwell not in vs, we haue no part in him: and therefore here is mention of conceiuing and bringing him forth. What is more glorious then to be euen as the mother of Christ? And the same is euery faithfull soule. This ought greatly to stirre vp our minds to seeke the holy faith. Thus farre you haue seene how she hath set forth and declared her most vehement loue, by ascending vp with him out of the wildernesse: such a thing as the like is not done by any Spouse vnto her welbeloued. Also we see that this her exceeding loue hath beene kindled and enflamed by his loue. And now in the next verse her loue breaketh forth into a vehement prayer, that she may be ioyned most neerly vnto him, and that he will alwaies haue her in minde: rendring a reason, that the vehemency and strength of her loue is such as by no meanes it can be ouercome: this is set forth by comparisons in this verse, and in the next verse following. First she requesteth that he will set her as a seale vpon his heart: a seale in a ring of gold was euer made much account of as a

precious thing: she requesteth that she may be so esteemed of him, and that he will set her euen vpon his heart. That which is in the heart of a man, is neerest vnto him, that he mindeth, that he loueth, that is deere and precious vnto him. She doth also desire to be set as a seale vpon his arme, that is, as a iewell alwaies in sight: so that now we may see the summe of her request. She doth in the vehemencie of her loue, desire to be deere and precious in the eyes of him whom she loueth, and to be most neerely ioyned vnto him as a precious iewell, both in the heart, and vpon his hand, so that he may alwaies minde her, and haue her in his sight, for we know, that whatsoeuer a man loueth with the greatest loue, that he desireth to be neere vnto, yea euen fastened vnto it. What doe you see then heere in the Bride, how is her affection set? She doth so set her heart vpon Christ her welbeloued, she doth so desire to bee alwaies with him, that she vtterly contemneth all things in comparison of him. What is the glory and the pompe, the riches and honours, and the pleasures of this world vnto her, more then vile drosse? And now she rendereth the reason of her desire, from the nature and force of loue: for loue (saith she) is strong as death. This is the first comparison, whereby she doth expresse the force of her loue, death is exceeding strong: for if we consider the great might

of Princes, of Kings, and of Emperours, yea of all the mightie Monarches in the world, death hath subdued and cast them downe. Who hath beene so strong as to resist death? where hath that mighty man been found, that could euer eschew his stroke? Yea if wee consider from whence death hath his dominion, you shall perceiue the force therof to be such, as that it cannot be vanquished by any creature: the reward of sinne is death. This is from the iustice of the most high Iudge: vnlesse sinne be satisfied and abolished, death cannot in any wise be vnderstood. Could all the Angels in heauen abolish death? Nay they could not satisfie the iustice and the wrath of God for sinne, therefore they cannot ouercome death to deliuer men. Only the Almightie sonne of God, Iesus Christ God and man, hath encountred hand to hand with this enemie, hath taken away his sting, and will at the last vtterly subdue him, so that he shall be quite swallowed vp in victorie, 1. *Cor.* 15. Behold then the force and strength of death, and see how shee compareth her loue with it. Her loue will not indure (the force of it is such) but that she must be neerely ioyned vnto her welbeloued. It will not be said nay, but that she must be set as a seale, euen as a precious iewell vpon his heart, & vpon his arme. Where there is no loue, there is no ioyning vnto Christ: there is no such bold n esse to come vnto

him,

him, but there is feare and horror. Loue as Saint *Iohn* doth teach in the fourth chapter of the first Epistle, casteth out feare: yea as he saith, *perfect loue casteth out all feare.* Then where loue is weake, the desire to bee ioyned with Christ is weake, where it is strong, there is a stronger desire: and when it falleth, that it be most vehement (as she setteth it forth here) then is there also the most earnest longing to bee euen in his heart, and in his hands, as a thing deere and precious vnto him. If this be the effect of loue to desire to be ioyned with the Lord, & the effect arguing the cause, doth not our weake desire to bee ioyned with Christ, argue the greate weakenesse of our loue? The loue of many is strong to the world, and that causeth them to desire to be euen fastened vnto it: riches and honours are their welbeloued, or they know none.

The next clause is to the same effect, when she saith, *Ielousie is cruell as the graue.* The words are, that ielousy is hard as the graue: or as we may call it zeale. We take ielousie betweene marrie parties, where the one hath the other in suspition that their loue is deriued vnto some other. The bride here by zeale of ielousy vnderstandeth the vehement affection of loue, in which she desireth that his affection may also be continued towards her. And this she saith is hard as the graue: we know what power the graue hath, how hard it is,

how inuincible: it deuoureth all men, it keepeth downe all men: for who hath had the strength to come out of it? There haue beene some raised vp out of it by the power of God, and chiefly the sonne of God himselfe, who was buried and rose againe, but what man hath had the power to raise vp himselfe? To this force of the graue, she compareth the heate and vehemencie of her loue: so that still she doth shew, that the greatnesse of her loue will not suffer her, but that she must needs couet to be ioyned as a signet most neerely vnto him.

In the next clause she saith: *the coales thereof are fiery coales, and a vehement flame.* It is manifest that she compareth her loue vnto fire, both to the coales, and to the flame: but somewhat we are to not: first about the words. Thus wee may translate them: *the coales thereof are coales, the fire of the flame of God.* In the first part of this (*the coales thereof are coals*) the speech is framed to shew that they be exceeding hot coals. The latter part is, to declare that the flame is a wonderfull great flame: for it is, as she saith, *the flame of God.* She setteth forth the greatnesse of the effect, by the greatnesse of the cause: for as God is greater then al, so are his works: so then this flame of God is as much as to say, a most vehement flame. This loue of the Church towards Christ, is fitly compared vnto fire, yea vnto a vehement fire, where

there

there be both hot burning coales, and a great flame: for the spirituall loue is very hot. For where the soule feeleth the loue of Christ, it is euen set on fire with loue towards him, euen with so hote a loue, as she compareth it here vnto the coals and flame of fire. And marke well how the flame is the flame of God: this fire indeed is kindled in the hearts of the faithfull by the holy Ghost. If we then will haue these coales, if we will haue the flame of God in vs, let vs craue instantly & cõtinually the heauenly fire of the lightning spirit. Then shall we boldly make our request to be set as a signet vpon his hart, and as a seale vpon his arme, and it shall not be denied vnto vs. For this we are to assure our selues, that here is not a demand or a petition made, which shall be denied vnto her. Therefore let euery faithfull soule assure her selfe, that if the heate and flame of loue towards Christ be in her, that then she is ioyned neere vnto him, she is as a precious iewell set vpon his heart, and also vpon his hand. If our faith be not such, as that it doth kindle such a burning loue of Christ in our hearts: let vs not deceiue our selues, it is not the true faith. We may seeme to haue confidence or boldnesse, but in the time of terror it will faile vs. Meditate therefore (beloued) daily, euen with deepe and serious meditation, how rich, how sweet, and how precious the Lord Iesus is. Call to mind what wonderfull

loue he hath shewed towards vs, what greatblessings and benefits he hath bestowed vpon vs, that thereby if it be possible this heauenly fire may be kindled, yea so as that it may be euen a most vehement flame.

And now to the last verse, in which she doth yet further declare the heate and force of her loue. Thus be her words: *My waters cannot quench this loue: the floods cannot drowne it.* Herein she doth purposely in a most high sort expresse that nothing can ouercome her loue, it is inuincible. As it is written of the loue of Christ that nothing can seperate his chosen from it: so here the spouse affirmeth, that her loue towards him cannot bee put out. And this you must obserue, that she frameth he speech according to her former comparison, when she said, *the coales thereof are coales, and the fire of the flame of God.* For what fire is there here, that many waters will quench, at least if floods of waters doe ouerflow it? But this heauenly fire cannot be quenched, the floods cannot put out. The diuell doth seeke to cast out all the waters he can for to extinguish it, yea the dragon doth cast out a flood out of his mouth, *Reuel.* 12. but all in vaine, for this loue cannot be quenched. O happie spouse that loueth her bridegroome with so strong a loue! She can neuer bee ouerthrowne: she can neuer bee separated from him. We see

some

some that for a brunt doe seeme to be euen wholy set on fire with the loue of Christ, and after a while it is quenched and gone. Many of these there bee in these dayes. Let vs beware, for hee that continueth to the end shall bee saued.

There is yet one clause, that she saith: *If a man would giue al the substance of his house for loue they would vtterly contemne it.* This loue cannot be worne away with any goods. The nature of man is much addicted to loue riches, and the treasures of this world: there is scarce any thing of such force to win the heart from Christ: but the Church here affirmeth, that if al treasures should be offered her to draw her loue from Christ, she would vtterly contemne them. This is no small commendation, considering (as I said) how the nature of al men is inclined to loue earthly things. It is most certaine, that many thousand which professe Christianitie, doe contrary to that which the holy Virgin here professeth. Gold and siluer, houses and lands doe so intice them, that they let goe the loue of Christ. They doe sell their loue, yea they euen sell their soules to the Diuel for a little money. Much better it is, that our loue to him bee such, as that in respect thereof, we account all things here below to bee but dung and drosse. The Lord of his infinite mercy grant vs to be thus affected. Amen.

THE

THE FIFTEENTH SERMON.

CHAP. VIII.

8. *Wee have a little sister, and shee hath no breasts, what shall wee doe for our sister when shee shall be spoken for?*

9. *If shee will bee a wall, wee build upon her a silver Palace: and if shee be a doore, wee will keepe her in with boards of Cedar.*

10. *I am a wall and my breastes are as towers, then was I as one that found favour in his eyes.*

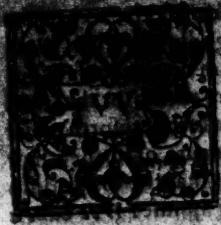
11. *Salomon had a vine in Baal hamon: he gave the vineyard unto keepers: every one bringeth for the fruit thereof a thousand peeces of silver.*

12. *But my vineyard which is mine, is before me: thee O Salomon belong the thousand peeces of silver; and two thousand to them that keepe the fruit thereof.*

13. *O thou that dwellest in the gardens, thy companions hearken to thy voyce, cause mee to heare it.*

14. *O my welbeloved, flie away, and be like unto the Roe, or to the yong Hart upon the mountains of spices.*

WE



WEare now come to the conclusion & shutting vp of this Song. Herein be indeed diuers things ouer handled. As first we see a motion, a consultation or a demand touching the Church of the Gentiles with a promise of great glory. Secondly, there is a comparison made betweene Salomons vineyard and the Church. And lastly, Christ doth put her in mind of her dutie towards him, and she enioyeth his presence and protection in all her need. Concerning the first of these, you know that in the time of Salomon, when this song was made, yea long before, and after, vntill Christ ascended into heauen, the Church was shut vp and bounded among the Iewes. God suffered the Gentiles to walke in the vanities of their owne minds many hundred yeares: but there were Oracles, and there were promises, that the time should be the calling of the glorified Church of the Gentiles, and be made one body with the Church of the Iewes. [illegible] Genesis, [illegible] Psalme. [illegible] Esay. [illegible] Esay. [illegible] Esay

them. For this is the nature of faith, to breed a loue in the hearts of the godly towardes those which belong to God whom they neuer saw, yea that haue beene long before them, or that shall belong after them. This loue bringeth forth praier for them, and a desire to procure or further their saluation. From hence it is that the Bride doth motion the matter vnto her Spouse: *We haue a little sister* (saith shee) *and shee hath no breasts: what shall wee doe for our sister in the day that she shall bee spoken for?* First we are to obserue, that this speech is framed according to the manner here in the world. A young little Damsell is not to be married vntill she grow vp in yeares, she is not for marriage, vntill shee haue breasts to nourish the children that she shall bring forth. Moreouer, whē she doth come to the ripenes of yeares to be bestowed in marriage, her friends do set her forth and speake for her. So here she saith, we haue a little sister, she is not yet growne vp, her time is not yet come to bee betrothed. She hath as yet no breasts, for hath not to nourish vp children. Her time will come that shee is to be commended and spoken for, what shall we then doe for her? Let vs consider euery point more particularly. At that time there was no Church of the Gentiles and yet she saith, we haue a sister. How could this be spoken? shee was not yet in being. Here we must obserue, that the decrees and promises

mises of God for things to come are so certaine, and infallible, that faith apprehendeth them, and speaketh of them before they be, even as if they were. And so she saith, we have a little sister. It hath beene noted before, that according to the manner of the Hebrewes, the whole is called the mother, and the parts are called sisters: that point is cleare enough: but why then doth she not say, I have a little sister, but we have a little sister? Is the Church of the Gentiles not only sister to the Church of the Iewes, but also the sister of Christ? Yea, she is the sister of Christ also. For that you see through this Song, that the Lord calleth the Church his sister. Here is the mistery of his incarnation: for hee hath taken vpon him our nature, he is become the first begotten among many brethren: *We are* (as the Apostle saith) *flesh of his flesh, and bones of his bones*, Ephesi. 5. So that he loueth his Church as a Spouse, and as a deare sister. Yea the Church of the Gentiles is precious vnto him, euen as the Church of the Iewes. Here may arise another question, how the Church of the Iewes could call the Church of the Gentiles a little sister, seeing the Churches of the Gentiles in greatnes and in number of true children, haue farre exceeded the Church of the Iewes. The Iewes were but one little nation, many great nations there were of the Gentiles, so that every way the Church of the Gentiles hath in greatnes

exceeded the Church of the Iewes: how doth she then call her a little sister, when she is greater then her selfe? I answer, that she doth not respect the number of the faithfull, which the Churches of the Gentiles should bring forth, but the time: because the time was not yet come that the Gentiles should be called and betrothed vnto Christ: she was as yet, as a little virgine, vnder age to be betrothed. Then for the next point, there was no spirituall nourishment for children that should be brought vp to God among the Gentiles, there were not the holy Oracles of God, there was not the sincere milke of the word. There were wise men of this world, great Philosophers and subtil disputers: but no true doctrine, to convert the soule to God, or to nourish it vp being converted. There was the worship of Diuels, and all manner of superstition. There was great boasting of diuine knowledge and high wisedome: but the Bride knoweth that in respect of the true wisedome, it was all nothing but foolishnesse: and that is the cause why she saith, that her little sister hath no brests.

Then touching the care that she hath for this her little sister, thus shee saith: *What shall wee doe for our sister, in the day that shee shall bee spoken for?* The summe of her speech is to know what preferment, what honour, glorie, and dignitie shall be laid vpon the Church of the Gentiles, as

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the time when they should bee called and made one bodie with the Iewes. But why doth she not say to Christ, What wilt thou doe for our sister, seeing all the benefits and all the glory bestowed vpon the Church doe flow from him alone? Is there any one blessing that commeth vpon the Church, whereof the Lord Iesus alone is not the author? how then saith she, *what shall we doe for our sister, &c.* Doth shee together with Christ bestow the graces and heauenly blessings? This is easily answered. Christ Iesus alone is the fountaine and the authour of all heauenly blessings vpon the Church, and yet the ancient Church of the Iewes ioyneth her selfe with him in calling and decking the Church of the Gentiles, because by her ministrie the Gospell was to bee preached vnto them. Christ Iesus then as the authour, bestoweth the heauenly treasures vpon the Gentiles and the Church of the Iewes, by her ministrie, is an instrument to carrie and to spread the same among the Gentiles. This we see was fulfilled, for the holy Apostles, and Euangelists which preached the Gospell to the Gentiles, were of the Iewes. Well then, shee saith to the spouse, *what shall we doe for our sister, when she shall be spoken for?* Here by the way wee may note, that seeing the Church of the Iewes had this care and loue to her little sister the Church of the Gentiles, and seeing that by her ministerie, and by the ministe-

rie

of her children the holy Apostles and others, the Gospell was spread among the nations, it is our part now to be as louing and as carefull, and as earnest in her behalfe with the Lord, as she was for vs: it doth seeme by the doctrine of Saint Paul, Rom. 11. that there shal be again a Church of the Iewes: We ought then to haue the like pittie vpon her, that shee had on vs, when wee were out.

Now followeth the answere of Christ, touching this their little sister, what should be done for her: If she be a wall (saith he) we will build vpon her a siluer palace, if she be a dore we will keepe her in with boardes of Cedar. Wee see plainely that Christ did allow of this manner of speech in his Spouse, when shee said, *What shall we doe for our sister*: for he speaketh after the same manner, saying, *If shee bee a wall, wee will build vpon her a siluer palace, &c.* Hee doth not exclude his Spouse from this worke, for by her ministerie it was wrought, as wee noted before. And now touching the summe of the matter, it is this, that shee shall hee built to bee the Citie of God, and a precious palace for the king of glory to dwell in. For by a wall and a dore, or gate, is meant a Citie, those two parts being put for the whole, and as I said, the siluer palace to bee built vpon the same, is the Palace or Temple for the most high God, As you know the Church is called the

[illegible] of God and the City of God. This is the highest glory that [illegible] can come to morsally [illegible] is handled more at large, Revel. 21. and there you may read touching the walls and gates of this City, and touching the glory thereof. There you may see the meaning of this, if she be a wall, and if she be a gate [illegible] shall be the finer Palace and [illegible] of Godhead.

And now see what the Bride saieth to this, [illegible] Christ of [illegible] this song is [illegible] a Wall, [illegible] a City [illegible] shad do [illegible] in his palace [illegible] the spouse [illegible] upon this promise of Christ to [illegible] is [illegible] in [illegible] goddly [illegible] their breasts [illegible] Christ [illegible] in his [illegible] seems to [illegible] against [illegible] I, [illegible] speaketh

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speaketh of that which was to come, as if it had beene come. Here then are three things which the bride glorieth in touching her happy estate at the comming in of her little sister, the Church of the Gentiles. The first is that she is then a wall, euen a goodly glorious City indeed, and the siluer Palace built vpon her. For although she were the City of God before, yet now far more large by the multitude and glory of the Gentiles comming in, & being made one body with her in Christ. But how is it that Christ saying, *If she be a wall*, speaking of her little sister, she maketh not answere she is a wall, but *I am a wall*? The reason of this is euident, that although as seuerall parts they be called sisters, yet ioyned in one, they bee but one Church. Her little sister ioyned vnto her, is become her selfe, for in that respect she saith, I am a wall. I am that glorious City of God, in me is that siluer Palace, the Palace of the great King. The second thing then is, that *her breasts are as Towers*. Her little sister shee said had no breasts, but now the doctrine is so plenteous, that her breasts be euen as Towers, there is milke to nourish great multitudes of Children, for when the word of the Lord went forth from Ierusalem, and the law out of Sion, vnto the mighty nations, according as the Prophets foretold it should come to passe, the

Lord

Lord gave great guifts of his spirit, and great light of knowledge in the heavenly mysteries and very great multitudes were turned to the Lord. In the time of the law, the Prophets did utter the doctrine of God, and spake of Christ: but not so cleerely as the Apostles did. Now her breasts became as towers. And then the third thing followeth, that she saith, I was then, as she that findeth favour (or as the word is) peace in his eyes. Not only her glory is now greater by so large an addition of the Gentiles, but also the time now draweth neere of the marriage. For the Lord alwaies foretold that it should be in the last dayes, that the Gentiles should be joyned to his people. True it is, that at this time, even when the holy Apostles were sent forth with this commission, *Goe teach all nations, &c.* Matth.

28. The Church was wonderfull glorious in the Lords eies, and the time commeth on very fast, that she shall enioy the full happines for ever. Here wee must consider that the Lord dealing so graciously with us, to be borne and to live in the time of the Gospell in the time of this great light, in the time when the breasts of the Church are as towers, that there is much to be required at our handes if wee let slippe by the heavenly doctrine, if we remaine now in ignorance and blindnes, if wee be now unthankfull

to the Lord how wretched and how miserable is our estate? what have wee not cause our selues?

Now we come to the second thing which is the comparison betweene Salomons vineyard and the Church. The Church is called a vine and a vineyard, and so the comparison is made here betweene her and another vineyard. As King Salomon did excell in glory, so all things that he had did in their kind excell. His vineyard in Baal Hamon, was a great and a goodly vineyard, and such as he made speciall account of, and receiued great commodity by it. But yet Christ saith, it was not like his vineyard. The differences are noted, the first is, that Salomon let out his vineyard vnto keepers, the second, that hee receiued but part of the fruits, and the keepers another part for their paines. But Christ keepeth his vineyard himselfe, and receiueth not a part but the whole fruit alone to himselfe. This is the summe. But let vs consider it more particularly by the words: first he saith Salomon hath a vine as I said before, the person is named that wee may know thereby the excellency of it. Secondly he noteth the place, when he saith in Baal Hamon. But not the proper name of any one place, but as if hee should say in a most fruitfull soile or place: for Baal signifieth a Lord, and Ha-

Hamon a multitude, so that it is as much as to say, in a place so plenteous for Vines, that it bringeth forth a multitude of Vines. The place is much for a vine, and therefore when the Lord will shew, by the Prophet, that he did all things to his vineyard to make it bring forth good fruit, he doth begin with the place, for the Prophet saith, *My well beloved hath a vine, Bekeren ben Shamen*, Esay, 5. Which is as much to say word for word, in an horne, the sonne of fatnesse. The horne is the corner of an hill, the other is that it is very fatte. Then next he saith, that Salomon let forth his vineyard unto keepers. For although King Salomon made great account of his vineyard, yet he did not dwell in it, and keepe it himselfe. He was not so much delighted with it, as alwayes to haue it in his presence and neuer out of his sight. For he let it out to keepers. These keepers & dressers of the vineyard must haue their hire, & therfore it is said, that they bring euery one a thousand peeces, or sickles of siluer, and part they reserue to themselues, as he saith, two hundred peeces. Our English translation saith two thousand to the keepers, but I suppose the fault did grow by the Printers, setting two thousand for two hundreth, and not by the translators, seeing there is not any thing in the wordes which might lead them to say two thousand. Now

come to the reddition. *But my vineyard which is mine* (saith the Lord) *is before me.* Heere is the dissimilitude, the vineyard of Christ, euen his Church, his deare Spouse, which appertaineth onely to him, is before him, or alwaies in his presence, he is so delighted therwith, he taketh such comfort and solace therein, and is so deare & precious vnto him, that he is alwaies present with it, and neuer absent from it one minute, he watcheth and keepeth it himselfe, and dwelleth in it. Salomon let forth his vnto keepers, but Christ doth not let forth his. And as his eye is alwaies vpon it to keep it, so he hath the whole fruits to himselfe, Salomon had his part, and the keepers theirs, but not so in this vine, for the whole commeth to Christ. I need not stand here to shew in many words how precious and how deare this vine is to the Lord, that he keepeth it himselfe, and how faithful the church is, which doth bring forth her fruits to none but him. Also I will not stay vpon this, to shew that Christ being alwaies present with his Church, and not letting it forth vnto keepers, how wicked and blasphemous that doctrine of the Romish Church is, that affirmeth the Pope to bee Christs Vicar: as if Christ were absent and had let forth this vineyard vnto him to keepe. Herevpon hee challengeth that hee is put in trust to doe what hee will. Christ saieth heere, that his

his vine is before him, his eye is neuer off from it, he keepeth it himselfe, it is not let forth to keepers, as if he were absent like King *Salomon* from his vine. *Behold* (saieth hee) *I am with you vnto the end of the world.* Mat. 28 And he appeareth to Saint *Iohn* in the middest of the seauen golden candlesticks which are the seauen Churches Reuel. 1. You may easily then discerne what a monster the Pope is, which wil needes be his Vicar, which is, one in his stead to doe that which hee himselfe should doe if hee were present. Here is Antichrist, that is one that taketh vpon him to be in Christs stead and yet is an aduersary. For vnder pretence of doing the duty of an head, he draweth al from Christ to receiue his lawes, and to put their trust in him. Let this monster passe with his seduced company, which are not the spouse of Christ, but his owne spouse. It may here be demanded, doth not Christ let forth his vineyard to dressers? did not *Paul* plant and *Apollo* water? do not all faithful Pastors and teachers shew their duty in keeping this Vine? I answere, It is most certain that the Prophets, the Apostles and all holy teachers may after a sort be called keepers and dressers of this Vine: but yet no further, but as Instruments whom Christ vseth: for he is present with them, he worketh by thē, & therfore he holdeth the 7. stars in his right

hand

hand, which are the Angels of the seauen churches, *Reuel* 1. The keepers of *Salomons* Vine do keep it, and dresse it in his absence; but the keepers of Christs Vine can doe nothing, vnlesse hee be with them and worke by them. As I said before, they be but instruments, he vseth them, hee is alway present, and doth worke by them. Also it may for the other part be said: shall not the faithfull teachers receiue reward for their labours? Yes there be promises of great reward vnto all that do performe their duty in that office. Is not that reward some part of the fruit which the Vine bringeth forth? No, this reward is promised and giuen by the Lord, it commeth not by men. And thus much for this matter.

Now to the last thing of all in the conclusion, which is in two parts: whereof the former is the voyce of the Bridegrome calling vpon his spouse to performe her duty: and the latter is the speech of the Bride, crauing his presence & speedy ayde in all her need. His words are these: *O thou that dueltest in the garden thy companions hearken to thy voyce: make mee to heare it.* Heere is (as I said) the duty of the Bride inioyned, yea the great and speciall duties: but it is darke to bee vnderstood, because our English translation hath somewhat swarued in the last word of the sentence, for it saith,

make

make me to heare it, adding this particle (*it*) which is not in the Hebrew. The word indeed is, *make mee heare*, in the most vsuall sense, and it doth signifie to preach, because they that preach, make those to heare whom they preach vnto. In this place therefore wee may take it thus: preach me: for that is the great office of the Church, to publish Christ. But wee will come to it in order as the words doe stand. *O thou that dwellest in the gardens.* The whole Church is called a garden full of all sweete plants, as we had before in this song. The particular Churches, which are the parts of the whole, bee called gardens. Now, because the vniuersall Church vpon earth, euen the spouse, is speed ouer all, shee is said to dwell in the gardens, that is, in all the particular assemblies which know and worship God aright, through the world: Her care is ouer all, they bee all her children, and her plants, and so shee is said to dwell in the gardens.

The next clause is, *The companions hearkning to the voyce, &c.* Who bee these companions, which hearken to the voyce of the Church, bee willeth hir to preach him vnto them? They be all men, men of all nations and people, which with reuerence do heare the heauenly Oracles which the church dooth publish and set soorth. Christ Iesus in the Gospell giueth this precept,

Giue

Giue not holy things to dogges, neither cast ye your pearles before swine. Those dogs could swine are such people, as the one sort of them neglect and despise the heauenly doctrine, & do as it were treade it vnder their feet, the other do hate & persecute both it, and those that bring it. From such dogs & swine, the bridegroome doth here distinguish the reuerent hearers of the voice of the church, calling them fellowes or companions. Heere may you obserue by the greatnesse of this dignity which Christ giueth vnto them, how acceptable a thing it is before God, to giue care to the doctrine of God published by his ministers. They be receiued into the fellowship of Christ and his Saints. What higher dignitie, then to bee a companion in this societie? How may this encourage vs to giue euen all diligence to hearken to the doctrine of God, vttered by the Church? Then that he willeth his spouse to make these companions that hearken to her voice, to heare of him: it is as much as to say, preach me vnto them. The Lord said to Peter, *Simon Ioanna louest thou mee, more then these?* And so againe, and the third time. And Peter answering, *Thou knowest Lord that I loue thee:* he addeth: *Feed my sheepe, feed my lambes, feed my sheep.* As if hee should say, this is the great fruit of thy loue which I require, preach mee to my chosen. So the Church professing that great

abun-

abundant loue of hers, a little before in this chapter, Christ requireth that she wil shew it in preaching him vnto his redeemed. As if hee should say, of all loue, publish and preach mee, lay open the treasures of life and saluation that are in me, vnto those that hearken. Herein then lieth the performance of the great duty of the Church, and the singular declaration of her loue to Christ, that she preach him. To glorify Christ, by opening to the world what he is, what treasures be in him, is a great matter. And because the life of his sheep doth depend vpon the preaching of him, hee requireth it of his spouse as a thing most acceptable vnto him. Let all the true ministers of the Gospell looke vpon this, how glorious and how acceptable a worke it is, to preach Christ crucified. How happy are they then whom God hath called to that office, so they do faithfully discharge their duty?

And now we will come to the last verse of all in this song, which is the speech of the bride, containing a vehement prayer: for as shee began this song, and with prayer, so doth she end it, and with prayer. For seeing wee haue no good thing of our selues, but all good things come downe from aboue, the beginning and the end of our song must bee with prayer. What other way haue we to pull downe graces and heauenly blessings vpon vs, but by this

Ask

Aske and yee shall haue: seeke and yee shall find: knock and it shall be opened vnto you. Matth. 7. Our whole spirituall life, our happinesse, and our protection dependeth vpon Christ: it standeth vs in hand then to call continually vnto him, as the spouse doth here. Touching the words of her prayer, our translation saith, *Flee away my welbeloued, and bee like to the Roe or young Hart.* This is not well translated: for doth the Church desire her Spouse to depart speedily from her? Shee requesteth him to come to her speedily. For the word indeed is, *Flie my welbeloued, and bee like to the Roe or young Hart:* that is come speedily vnto mee. As if she should say, O my welbeloued, thou doest enioyne mee to preach thee, and to lay open the rich treasures and glory of thy grace. I am very willing and ready to performe this duty, but I shall thereby procure mighty enemies: for the Prince of darknesse will raise vp all the bloody tyrants that hee can against mee: I am feeble and weake of my selfe, and not meet to encounter with them. Bee not absent therefore, leaue mee not to their desires, but come speedily for my succour and defence, in all my troubles: for then shall I be sure to preuaile. Whether shee call the heauens the mountaines of spices, or whether wee take it for the mountaine of the Lord here vpon earth, I take it not much ma-

terially.

terfall. The ſumme is (as I ſaid) that ſhe craueth his ſwift comming, from heauen like a Roe, and his ſpeedy aide and ſuccor, to ſupport, to ſtrengthen and to comfort her in all her troubles and afflictions. The Lord giue vnto vs the true vnderſtanding of this holy ſong, and a liuely feeling of the loue of Chriſt, that we may delight in him, and loue him againe, that wee may bring forth the ſweet fruites here mentioned, and be of his pleaſant plants, that when this vaine life is ended, we may raigne with him for euermore in the heauens. Amen.

FINIS.

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